# philosophy and the martial arts

## ENGAGEMENT

Edited by
Graham Priest and
Damon Young

ROUTLEDGE

# PHILOSOPHY AND THE MARTIAL ARTS

This is the first substantial academic book to lay out the philosophical terrain within the study of the martial arts and to explore the significance of this fascinating subject for contemporary philosophy.

The book is divided into three sections. The first section concerns what philosophical reflection can teach us about the martial arts, and especially the nature and value of its practice. The second section deals with the other direction of the dialectical interplay between philosophy and the martial arts: how the martial arts can inform philosophical issues important in their own right. Finally, because many of the notable martial arts are of Asian origin, there are particularly close links between the arts and Asian philosophies—and Buddhism in particular—and therefore the last section is devoted to this topic.

The essays in this collection deal with a wide range of philosophical issues: normative ethics, meta-ethics, aesthetics, phenomenology, the philosophy of mind, Ancient Greek and Buddhist thought. By demonstrating the very real nature of the engagement between the martial arts and philosophy, this book is essential reading for any serious student or scholar with an interest in the martial arts, Eastern philosophy, the philosophy of sport, or the study of physical culture.

**Graham Priest** is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the CUNY Graduate Center, and Boyce Gibson Professor Emeritus at the University of Melbourne. He is well known for his work on logic and paradox, metaphysics, and the history of philosophy. Priest is the author of numerous books and has published articles in nearly every major philosophical and logical journal. In addition to his work in philosophy and logic, he practices Karate-do and is 3rd Dan, International Karate-do Shobukai; 4th Dan, Shi'to Ryu, and an Australian National Kumite Referee and Kata Judge.

**Damon Young** is a Honorary Fellow in Philosophy at the University of Melbourne, where he was a Research Fellow in Aesthetics from 2005 to 2007. Damon is the author of the books *How to Think About Exercise*, *Voltaire's Vine*, and *Distraction*. He is also co-editor, with Graham Priest, of *Martial Arts and Philosophy: Beating and Nothingness*. Damon has published in various scholarly journals, including *Philosophy Today* and *Philosophy East and West*, and in 2013 he was awarded the Australasian Association of Philosophy's Media Prize for his work in public philosophy. He holds a *shodan* rank in Goju Ryu Karate-dō.

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**Philosophy and the Martial Arts**
Engagement
*Edited by Graham Priest and Damon Young*

# PHILOSOPHY AND THE MARTIAL ARTS

## Engagement

*Edited by*
*Graham Priest and Damon Young*

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# CONTRIBUTORS

**Ross Barham** is the Head of Philosophy at Melbourne High School, Australia, and is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne, where he is finishing up his dissertation on the role that language plays in our possession of the concept of objectivity. He has attained the degree of Master of Arts on the topic of philosophical conceptions of saintliness, and recently taught this material at the Melbourne School of Continental Philosophy.

**Steve Bein** teaches Philosophy at Texas State University. His most recent book, *Compassion and Moral Guidance*, is a comparative study of the nature and role of compassion in ethics in the East and the West. His first book, *Purifying Zen*, is the first English translation of a landmark study of the thirteenth century Zen Master Dōgen Kigen.

**Sylvia Burrow** is Associate Professor at Cape Breton University, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, and a recent scholar in residence at the Canadian Centre for Ethics and Practical Affairs (2011–2012). Her research grounds philosophical analyses of autonomy and integrity in emotion theory, feminist philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science. Recent work focuses on the pressing issue of violence against women to show that a culture of violence against women impairs women's capacity to flourish as moral persons.

**Jesús Ilundáin-Agurruza** is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Linfield College (Oregon). He currently serves as President for the International Association for the Philosophy of Sport (IAPS). He has published articles and reviews in *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport, Fair Play*, and other journals, written chapters for anthologies on risk, cycling, sailing, soccer, hunting, martial arts, and comparative philosophy, and edited a book on cycling and philosophy (with M Austin).

**Kevin Krein** is an Associate Professor of Philosophy and the Academic Director of Outdoor Studies at the University of Alaska Southeast. He regularly teaches academic courses in Eastern philosophy and philosophy of sport as well as applied outdoor skills courses such as backcountry skiing and mountaineering. He has published several peer reviewed articles and book chapters in the area of philosophy of sport. His chapter 'Sparring with Emptiness: Existentialism and the Martial Arts,' was included in Graham Priest and Damon Young (eds), *Martial Arts and Philosophy*.

**Henry Martyn Lloyd** is a Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Queensland. He specialises in the history of French philosophy, particularly in the philosophy of the French Enlightenment and in twentieth-century 'Continental' philosophy. His doctoral thesis was on the philosophy of the Marquis de Sade in the context of Enlightenment thought. He has published work on affect theory, on Michel Foucault, and on the relationship between Bataille and Beauvoir. He is the editor of *The Discourse of Sensibility: The Knowing Body in the Enlightenment* (Springer Dordrecht, 2013).

**Graham Priest** is Distinguished Professor at the Graduate Center, CUNY, and Boyce Gibson Professor Emeritus at the University of Melbourne. He works in logic, metaphysics, and the history of philosophy. His books include: *In Contradiction*, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, *Towards Non-Being*, *Doubt Truth to be a Liar*, *Introduction to Non-Classical Logic*, and *One*.

**Simon Roberts-Thomson** received his PhD in Philosophy from the University of Arizona in 2010. His work focuses on issues relating to the philosophy of slavery and self-respect and his papers have appeared in *Res Publica* and *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*. From 2005 until 2007 he was a Research Fellow at the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics at the University of Melbourne. He now works primarily in the secondary education sector as a philosophy teacher.

**Gillian Russell** is Professor of Philosophy at UNC Chapel Hill. She is the author of *Truth in Virtue of Meaning: A defence of the analytic/synthetic distinction.* Most of her work is in epistemology and the philosophy of logic and language. She received her PhD from Princeton in 2004.

**Markus Schrenk** is a Research Fellow at the University of Cologne working on meta-metaphysics, i.e. on the epistemic questions whether and how we can gain knowledge about metaphysical issues. Before returning to Germany, Markus was a fellow at Nottingham University, where he focused on first order metaphysics of science (What is a law of nature? What are dispositions? etc.), and a Lecturer and Junior Research Fellow at Oxford University where he also received his DPhil. He has published books and papers within metaphysics, philosophy of science and of language.

**Richard Schubert** is Professor of Philosophy at Cosumnes River College, where he teaches Asian Philosophy, Philosophy of the Martial Arts, and Ethics. He is also Hapkido Instructor at the University of California at Davis Experimental College. He holds a Master's Degree in Philosophy from the University of Connecticut with a specialisation in Asian Philosophy and a PhD in Philosophy from the University of California, Davis, with a specialisation in Ethics. A member of the Society for the Study of Philosophy and the Martial Arts, which meets in conjunction with the American Philosophical Association (Pacific Division), his recent work concerns the intersection of classical Asian philosophy and traditional martial arts practice.

**Koji Tanaka** is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. His research focuses on logic, history and philosophy of logic, Buddhist philosophy, classical Chinese philosophy and Japanese philosophy.

**Damon Young** is a Honorary Fellow in Philosophy at the University of Melbourne. His interests include the history of ideas, ethics and aesthetics. He is the author of *Distraction* (MUP, 2008), *Philosophy in the Garden* (MUP, 2012) and *How to Think About Exercise* (Pan Macmillan, 2014), and the co-editor of *Martial Arts and Philosophy* (Open Court, 2010). Damon is also a prolific columnist and regular radio guest.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Philosophy and the martial arts

*Graham Priest and Damon Young*

### 1 Philosophy and other things

This anthology is, as far as we know, unique of its kind. While 'pop' essays on philosophy and the martial arts are quite common in the mainstream media, this volume is written by and for professional philosophers, and for their students.[1] As both professional philosophers and martial artists, we (the editors)—and a number of the other people we know in the same category—feel that the interaction between the two activities is philosophically valuable. This is the first attempt to put the philosophy of the martial arts, as it were, on the serious philosophical map.

As most philosophers will ask at this point: what do philosophy and the martial arts have to do with each other? For any X there is a philosophy of X: philosophy of language, philosophy of history, philosophy of sport. Philosophy interacts fruitfully with many areas of life and thought. Typically, it does so in a dialectical fashion. The philosophy of X investigates those aspects of X that one might think of as philosophical; but it also investigates philosophical issues which are important in their own right, and which are thrown up by X. Thus, for example, much in the philosophy of science has been written on the nature of scientific methodology and of the reality that science describes; but scientific developments have also triggered important philosophical issues, such as that between primary and secondary properties (in the 'Scientific Revolution'), or concerning determinism and randomness (in quantum theory). Similarly, philosophical ideas have been applied in the analysis of art (think of Coleridge and Ruskin); on the other side, developments such as those in twentieth-century art have raised hard questions about the nature of art itself (the work of Richard Wollheim and Arthur Danto, for example). The dialectical interaction between philosophy and the martial arts has the same bicameral nature.

## 2 The martial arts in the history of philosophy

Of course, not all the interactions between philosophy and other fields or pursuits are equally profound. And it might be thought that the connection between philosophy and the martial arts is relatively superficial. In the end, the proof of this pudding will be in the eating, and we are confident that the essays in this volume provide a substantial first course.[2]

Still, it is worth briefly canvassing the philosophical nature of the topic, if only so the reader might know what to expect. We will begin with precedent: one mark of the importance of the connection between the two pursuits is the fact that important philosophers themselves have ruminated on it. The most obvious place to start (at least for Western philosophers) is with one of the great speculative thinkers: Plato.

In his final extant dialogue, *Laws*, the Athenian philosopher had the citizens of his ideal state train in wrestling and other fighting arts. A wrestler himself in his youth—Platon ('broad-shouldered') was reportedly his grappling nickname—Plato believed that the martial arts were physically and mentally valuable. First, they prepared the youth for combat. For this reason, Plato rejected all wrestling practiced in a spirit of 'idle vainglory'—the point was victory, not medals (Plato 1989, 796a). Second, wrestling encouraged 'strength and health'—presumably muscular power and cardio-vascular fitness (Plato 1989, 796a–b). Elsewhere, Plato recommended sprinting in full armour—the *hoplitodromos* competition—for the same reason: running on the battlefield for defence or offence (Plato 1989, 832e–833b). Third, Plato noted that wrestling must be 'practiced with spirit and gallant bearing' (Plato 1989, 796a–b). In other words, the wrestlers' physical efforts were to be accompanied by a mental attitude of perseverance and precision. As they were 'exercising in the disengaging of neck, arms, and ribs,' (Plato 1989, 796a) Plato's youths were learning important virtues. Plato also used the example of a well-known athlete, Iccus of Tarentum, to demonstrate that the urge to win can have broader ethical implications. 'Such was his passion for victory, his pride in his calling, the combined fortitude and self-command of his character, that,' wrote Plato of upright Iccus, 'he never once came near a woman, or a boy either, all the time he was in training.' (Plato 1989, 839e–840a) A lesser-known Platonic dictum: no sex before a fight.

Plato may or may not have been right about the dispositions generated by wrestling, or about the desirability of the Spartan-inspired state they served. The point is that Plato identified martial arts as philosophically valuable practices. Specifically, he thought that they cultivated ethical virtues, and discouraged vices (Reid 2007). In this, Plato's defence of the martial arts is part of a long tradition of practical ethics initiated by the Greeks, concerned primarily with the identification of some normative human ideal, and the habits required to cultivate it. Put simply, Plato believed that the martial arts, albeit practiced in very specific ways, were necessary for 'the good life.'

As an example of the interplay between philosophy and the martial arts in the Eastern philosophical traditions, the obvious place to begin is Buddhism,

though essays in this volume also discuss Taoism, Shintō, and Confucianism.[3] According to legend, the Buddhist monk Bodhidharma introduced martial arts to the Shaolin monastery in the sixth century (Reid and Croucher 1983). As the story goes, this was not simply for protection, but for physical and mental health. The monks were easily tired and distracted—the Zen patriarch remedied their malaise with tea, but also with martial drills which became the basis of the Shaolin *wushu* today. Today the Shaolin monks still practice *wushu*—often for paying audiences.

While the story is apocryphal, and possibly a seventeenth-century invention (Shahar 2008), the basic premise is telling: not only is there no obvious contradiction between philosophical reflection and the martial arts, but monks can also benefit from the vigour and stamina that *wushu* provides. The techniques of kicking, punching, leaping and breathing made the Zen adepts more committed to study and meditation and, in this, more able to seek enlightenment. In other words, the martial arts were part of training for a more philosophical life; were part of the monk's *ēthos*.

The connection between the martial arts and Zen Buddhism has, in fact, been a particularly close one. Zen took Indian Buddhist philosophical views on the nature of the self and other matters, and, under the influence of Daoism, worked them into a highly distinctive picture (Siderits 2007; Kasulis 1981). In China and, especially, Japan, the martial arts were often informed by Zen philosophy, and fed into Zen practice. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Japan provides two well-known examples. Swordman Musashi Miyamoto, author of *A Book of Five Rings* (1984), was a keen student of Buddhism, and practiced Zen calligraphy and painting. Rinzai Zen monk Takuan Sōhō wrote *The Unfettered Mind* (2012). In this classic, Takuan brings Zen philosophy of mind to bear on techniques of effective swordsmanship, and also provides martial case studies for Zen thought. Rational but non-calculative action, for example, offers an intriguing puzzle for the philosophy of mind: how do I act purposively without thinking about my actions or my purpose? And what is meant by 'I' here?

In short, there are significant historical precedents, in Western and Eastern traditions of scholarship, for the association between martial arts and philosophy. Specifically, philosophers have treated the martial arts as sources of ethically relevant dispositions, or as pursuits worthy of philosophical reflection. These, in turn, are two of the most recognisable fields of philosophical enquiry: first, human flourishing, and how it might be cultivated; and, second, the nature and cogency of concepts.[4] The first tends to ask 'Is it valuable?' while the second tends to ask 'Is it true?,' 'How is it related to other concepts?' or more fundamentally 'Does the concept make sense?' Obviously these two enterprises can be linked, since, as was the case with Plato and the Zen philosophers, a basic metaphysical outlook can provide a model of human flourishing to cultivate. But regardless of their interplay, the point is that these two broad streams of philosophical activity are recognisable in the past and now, and the philosophy of the martial arts sit comfortably within both.

## 3 From philosophy to the martial arts

In the rest of this introduction we will briefly give the reader a taste of the discussions in the essays in this collection. These deal with a number of interrelated matters. We break them up into three sections, as this provides a useful way of structuring the material. But because of the interconnections, the sections are somewhat arbitrary; and one should not suppose that material in one section is irrelevant to others.

The first section concerns what philosophical reflection can teach us about the martial arts, and especially the nature and value of its practice. One issue on the agenda—and one we have already flagged with Plato—is the connection between a martial training, and moral virtues and vices.

The first essay in the collection casts doubts on the claim that a martial training necessarily promotes virtues. Rather, it can promote vices. In 'The promise and the peril of the martial arts,' Simon Roberts-Thomson starts by turning back to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. He argues that it is not clear how practicing to fight leads to stable, rational dispositions—of doing *and* feeling—that are ethically valuable. Even if we grant that the Karate student, for example, is only 'practicing' to knife-hand someone in the throat, this suggests the possibility that knife-handing is something she *wants* to do, and is now *more likely* to do. In other words, the martial arts might encourage vices of emotion and action. Having noted the possible virtues of martial arts—including temperance and courage—Roberts-Thomson concludes that, while there is no conclusive empirical evidence either way, it is 'plausible that studying a martial art may in fact lead to vice rather than virtue. For those of us who study martial arts, this is something that should give us pause.'

The theme is approached from a different perspective by Gillian Russell in 'Practicing evil: training and psychological barriers in the martial arts.' Russell considers Morton's 'barrier' theory of evil: that evil is not simply behaviour, but the behaviour's genesis. Humans, Russell argues, have an instinctive wariness, fear or disgust at severely harming or humiliating others. Evil arises when this barrier is removed, which can be achieved with desensitisation, conditioning, and dehumanisation of victims. Russell considers the possibility that some martial arts are encouraging evil by, for example, simulating street violence. And martial artists' common rebuttals of these criticisms—that martial artists are all peaceful, or teachers ought to only train peaceful students—are not convincing. Russell concludes by introducing the role of gender: she suggests that it might actually be fruitful for many women to have their barrier 'lowered' (but not removed) by martial arts training, overcoming the 'sweet, submissive behaviour,' as Russell puts it, rewarded by patriarchal society.

In 'Martial arts and moral life,' Sylvia Burrow also addresses gender in the context of martial arts, painting a more positive picture of how they can promote moral qualities. Specifically, she argues that the martial arts can be liberating for women. Because violence against women is common to all societies, it is no surprise that women fear violence, specifically physical and sexual violence. The threat of violence prevents women from forming and/or

maintaining identity-conferring commitments if it undermines self-confidence and self-esteem. 'Women are encouraged to internalize social stigmas concerning our weakness and vulnerability,' writes Burrow, 'and are concomitantly discouraged from bold and assertive behaviour.' Undermined self-confidence weakens the possibility of upholding one's commitments, and thus threatens the possibility of having and maintaining both integrity and autonomy. Burrow argues that the martial arts improve the possibilities of both these things by fostering the means to be resolute in the face of threatened violence. Martial arts training thus improves women's possibilities for moral action in a group routinely so targeted and threatened.

Some who practice a martial art have seen in it, not just a vehicle for engendering desirable virtues, but as an end in itself: a way of life that is both distinctive and valuable. In his essay, 'Philosophy as a way of life and the practice of martial arts,' Henry Martyn Lloyd examines this possibility. He argues that in the phrase 'philosophy of the martial art,' the best way to understand the word 'philosophy' is not as a scholarly practice or a religion. Drawing on the works of Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault, Lloyd argues that it is best understood as a 'way of life' and a 'care of the self,' in which truths about oneself and the world are realised in practice. In this light, the martial arts have no necessary connection to the virtues of Aristotle or Confucius, to give two commonly cited ethicists. Instead, Lloyd argues, the martial arts realise a variety of social and existential truths, including those that a middle-class majority might find ethically problematic: the 'body capital' acquired by hyper-masculine bouncers, for example. But 'even at their most modern and most brutal,' writes Lloyd, 'martial arts are still forms of spiritual ascesis.'

## 4 From the martial arts to philosophy

The chapters in the second section deal, generally, with the other direction of the dialectical interplay on our agenda: how the martial arts can inform philosophical issues important in their own right.

Ethics are still on the agenda. In 'Understanding quality and suffering through the martial arts,' Steve Bein argues that the basic concept of 'utility' in utilitarianism is often misconceived, because it assumes that pleasure and pain necessarily correlate with utility and disutility respectively. For Bein, the difference between utility and disutility is one of quality rather than just quantity, and judgements of quality require *meaning*. In other words, the value given to any pain depends on its psychological and social context: we scream at a stubbed toe, but look back on a shoulder-lock with a smile. Drawing on the psychological research of Melzack, Bein argues that this is a physiological phenomenon: we literally do not feel pain *as* pain in some circumstances. '[U]nderstanding the quality of suffering helps explain some of our decisions and moral preferences,' Bein writes, 'and...the utilitarian analysis is improved by this understanding.'

The next two chapters move us from ethics to aesthetics. In his 'Is proprioceptive art possible?,' Markus Schrenk first defines art in a Wittgensteinian fashion, listing common aspects of the family resemblance involved. Schrenk then highlights the most common modes of art enjoyment—visual and aural—and introduces another: proprioception, the kinesthetic sense. For Schrenk, the martial arts can be enjoyed as a proprioceptive art *for performers*, rather than audiences, insofar as they allow for pleasurable, expressive, meaningful experiences, requiring high levels of skill but having little practical value. Schrenk's aesthetic argument also has an ethical implication: that by studying the martial arts, students can develop new ways of enjoying their own bodies. '[T]o feel and perceive our bodies from within,' might be, argues Schrenk, 'a positive affirmation of being embodied creatures.'

A very different perspective on aesthetics—broadly a phenomenological one—is given by Ross Barham in his 'A sublime peace.' Specifically, Barham uses the Japanese martial art of Aikido as a case study, arguing for the existence of a kinesthetic sublime. Barham first introduces the Kantian notion of the 'dynamically sublime,' noting that it is felt by confronting large and threatening things, doing so safely, and recognising our own independence of them. In other words, it is a combination of fear and uniquely human liberty. In Aikido, argues Barham, the practitioner feels the sublime, not by watching herself or others, but by safely *feeling* fear proprioceptively: in movement, speed, balance, and so on. In this, what is sublime is not Aikido's tenets or techniques, but the practitioner herself: a bodily awareness of her freedom, but also her mortality.

The following chapters take us from phenomenology and aesthetics to phenomenology and the philosophy of mind. In 'On self-awareness and the self,' Koji Tanaka introduces Damasio's claim that every experience includes some 'sense of self.' Martial arts scholars and students often seem to contradict Damasio's outlook. Takuan, for example, wrote of the 'no self' required for swordsmanship. Tanaka explores the 'no self' of the Nikāya Buddhist texts and the Zen Buddhist philosopher Dōgen, and finds that the latter's conception fits with Takuan's description of 'no self' in swordsmanship. In particular, the self is conceived as 'first-personally given experience': that is, the situated subject necessary to encounter objects at all. The self is not a thing in the spotlight, but the light itself. So 'no self' refers to the avoidance of conscious, calculative awareness of oneself, rather than the complete lack of a self. 'It is the instrumental notion of selfhood that becomes problematic for the martial artists,' Tanaka writes. 'Martial artists are self-aware without being aware of themselves in order to respond.'

In '*Mushin* and flow: an East–West comparative analysis,' Kevin Krein and Jesús Ilundáin, continue the discussion of what is to be learned about the mind from the martial arts. Specifically, they examine the notion of *mushin* (no mind) often taken to be essential in successful martial practice (as, for example by Takuan), and compare it with the notion of 'flow' in contemporary psychology and philosophy of sport. While recognising the epistemological obstacles to observing others' psychological states, Krein and Ilundáin analyse

texts in the Zen tradition to give an account of *mushin*. The authors conclude that this state is very similar to what psychologist Csikszentmihalyi calls 'flow.' While martial artists were expected to adopt this state rather than to let it arise (as in rock-climbing, for example), both states include feelings of timelessness and freedom, and merging of the self with the pursuit. Both states are also 'autotelic': ends in themselves, rather than merely means to an end. Krein and Ilundáin then argue that both Western and Eastern ideas of peak experience characterise martial arts practice as embodied, situated, and reflexive knowledge. This is opposed to cognitivist theories of behaviour, but also to Dreyfus' model of unconscious coping. Krein and Ilundáin conclude by noting that, despite these similarities in the structure of experience, the content of peak experience can change with cultural context.

## 5 Buddhism and other Asian philosophical traditions

Because many of the notable martial arts are of Asian origin, it is unsurprising that there are particularly close links between the arts and Asian philosophies—and Buddhism in particular, as we have noted. Clearly, several of the preceding chapters deal with aspects of this. The chapters in the last section are devoted to the matter entirely.

If Buddhism is anything, it is a peaceful philosophy. But the martial arts, if they are anything, are a training in violence. How are these two things compatible? The question is explored by Rick Schubert in '*Ahiṃsā*, Buddhism, and the martial arts: a soteriological consequentialist approach to understanding violence in martial practice.' Schubert argues that martial arts practice, contrary to the protestation of students and teachers, does involve violence or harm, even if the practitioners are not malicious. He then argues that the apparent contradiction between this and the Buddhist doctrine of *ahiṃsā* (no harm) can be resolved by a certain understanding of Mahāyāna Buddhist ethics: as neither a deontological theory nor as a virtue ethics, but as act-consequentialism. Specifically, an act is morally right if the total suffering it causes, from the present into the future, is less than the total suffering available alternatives would have caused. Against Keown's influential position, Schubert argues that: Buddhism makes no strict division between consequences and 'goodness,' but rather defines the latter in terms of the former; and intentions are important because they change karmic consequences. Schubert concludes by arguing that the *dō* or 'ways' of martial arts, are examples of practices that might involve violence or pain, but which cause less suffering overall.

The apparent tension between the violence of the martial arts and Buddhism is also a theme of Graham Priest's 'The martial arts and Buddhist philosophy.' He resolves the tension by locating appropriate martial practice, strange as it may seem initially, as a species of Buddhist practice. The goal of Buddhism's Eightfold Path is freedom from attachment and the suffering it brings. Its techniques are designed to alter people's ideas, ethics, and attention. While conceptual education is rare in Karate schools, fighting and forms (*Kata*), can

play exactly the same role, according to Priest. These practices not only fit with Buddhist teachings, but also reveal why many Karate practitioners are non-violent: the martial arts are training in mental discipline and calm.

In the final chapter in the volume, 'Bowing to your enemies,' Damon Young broadens the picture from Buddhism to other Asian systems of thought, by examining the role of courtesy in the modern Japanese martial arts. Young recognises that Karate and Judo, for example, are not 'pure' manifestations of pre-modern Japanese society—in Japan or the West. However, he argues that the modern Japanese martial arts have certainly taken up ideas and practices from three central philosophical traditions—Shintō, Confucianism and Zen Buddhism—and that the courtesies of these arts reflect this fact. Young argues that courtesy is best understood as sincerity in Shintō, social responsibility in Confucianism, and brutal enlightenment in Zen Buddhism. These are exemplified in the Karate school by commitment to techniques and teachings, rituals that demonstrate care, and violence that shocks students out of egocentrism. 'This leads respectively,' argues Young, 'to the removal of what is physically and ethically compromising, the forging of fruitful educational bonds, and the free and spontaneous activity necessary to take these up in the [school] and in everyday life.' Young concludes by noting that these virtues are neither unique to Japan, nor strictly necessary to 'Japaneseness' or martial arts training.

The discussion takes us back to where our chapters began: the question of whether and what virtues may be engendered by a training in the martial arts.

## Conclusion

The chapters in this collection show the very real nature of the engagement between the martial arts and philosophy. This does not, of course, mean that Karate is philosophy for amateurs, or that Aikido students necessarily have particular philosophical insight. The point is that the martial arts, as exemplary practices or cases studies, have genuine philosophical value.

The chapters in the collection deal with a wide range of philosophical issues: normative ethics, meta-ethics, aesthetics, phenomenology, the philosophy of mind, Ancient Greek and Buddhist thought.[5] There is, no doubt, much more to be said about all these issues. Moreover, there is equally no doubt that the martial arts engage with other important philosophical areas, including: epistemology, the philosophy of language, moral psychology, social and political philosophy, the philosophy of education, and the history of ideas—though such topics are largely absent from the current collection.

We see this collection, then, as merely a sampler of the interesting philosophical terrain of the martial arts. We sincerely hope that it will prompt other philosophers to explore this further.[6]

## Notes

1 The editors of this volume also edited another collection (Priest and Young 2010), which is half way between pop philosophy and professional philosophy. We certainly do not claim that the chapters in this collection are the first philosophically serious essays in the area. See, for example, Behuniak (2010), Thompson (2007), Wawrytko (2007).
2 One important philosophical question about the martial arts is how to characterise them. This is a hard and non-trivial question. Should Tai Chi be included? Should war-gaming? One of us (Young) touched on the question in 'Martial arts and martial value,' a paper presented at the 'Martial Arts and Philosophy' conference, University of Melbourne, 12/13 July 2010. But we do not need to address this issue here. We will finesse it by sticking to some paradigm cases.
3 Sadly, there may still be some philosophers who think that anything that went on East of Mesopotamia is not philosophy. Fortunately, however, this benighted view is now disappearing as Western philosophers are actually starting to read the material. One of us (Priest 2011) has had something to say on this.
4 That this is a philosophical collection does not mean that the chapters ignore work in other disciplines. As will be obvious, our contributors draw on biology, psychology, sociology and anthropology among other disciplines. The point is that this volume is primarily concerned with philosophical concepts, debates and problems.
5 It should go without saying that we do not necessarily endorse all the conclusions. One can recognise that a chapter is reasonable and interesting without agreeing with its findings.
6 We are indebted to David Sweeney for all the hard work he put into producing the final manuscript and preparing the index. His thoughtful and reliable work relieved us of much of the load of the final production.

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# PART I

# From philosophy to the martial arts

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# 1

# THE PROMISE AND THE PERIL OF THE MARTIAL ARTS

*Simon Roberts-Thomson*

> In the minds of many who come to the sport, there persists a vague notion that judo is character building. It is a nice-sounding idea, but what exactly does it mean? Surely sitting in front of the television eating crisps all day is character building, but what kind of character does it build? Should the question we are asking be: 'Is judo character *improving*?' Does the study and practice of throwing people on to the floor really make someone a better person?
>
> *Law 2007, 96*

## 1 Introduction

A recent study found that 43 per cent of people beginning Judo and 62 per cent of people beginning Karate agreed that the cultivation of character was a motivation in choosing to study a martial art (Zaggelidis et al. 2004). To most people outside of the martial arts, the idea that there could be a link between studying a martial art and improving one's character is likely to seem puzzling. How is it possible that learning techniques designed to hurt and kill others could lead to someone becoming a better person? Within the martial arts, however, such beliefs are widespread and ancient. Consider the following quote from a document from the Kashima-Shinryū, a Japanese martial art dating back to the fifteenth century:

> Know that the essence of Kashima-Shinryū lies not in savoring the unavailing joy of felling an enemy, of destroying evil, but in fostering noble men who strive to revere and satisfy the will of those who govern the realm. Thus it nurtures in those who practice it the will to kill one only to save ten thousand.
>
> *Friday 1997, 99*

Although one may disagree with the particular conception of nobility presented here, it is clear that for members of the Kashima-Shinryū the end of their practice is the cultivation of noble characters rather than martial skill for its own sake. Indeed it is likely that the link between martial skill and character development goes back much further than this to at least the Warring States period (475BCE–221BCE) in ancient China (Lorge 2012, Chapter 2).

In contrast to the above, however, we can also find descriptions of the martial arts that point to considerably less savoury consequences of such training. One example is provided by Ellis Amdur:

> When I practice my koryu,[1] I make every effort to reach the spirit of the founders, who were born and died in a bloody period of survival. Such practice has both kept me safe and enabled me to help and protect other people. But as I practice, I often stop and think, "What the hell are you doing? There are millions of people, right this minute, slaughtering others using methods not too different from what you are practicing now." I have found good reasons to continue my martial training, but I must be mindful of its pitfalls every time I practice. To paraphrase Nietzsche, if I begin to play with power, power may begin to play with me.
>
> *Amdur 2000, 38*

This quote points to a very different, and less frequently acknowledged, possibility associated with training in the martial arts. To practice a martial art is to learn how to cause damage to the human body in an efficient and methodical manner. In learning to do this, its practitioners are exposed to a kind of moral peril; learning to harm people exposes them to the possibility that they will become the sort of people who are likely to do such things. Thus, the martial arts also seem to be consistent with the cultivation of traits that are vicious.

This chapter will explore both of these aspects of the martial arts, both the promise and the peril. One way of looking at this is to ask whether, and in what way, learning a martial art can help us to be virtuous. There seem to be three basic relationships that might hold between studying a martial art and virtue: perhaps learning a martial art makes it more difficult to be virtuous, or even facilitates the cultivation of vicious traits; perhaps it helps us to be virtuous; or perhaps there is no relationship between learning a martial art and becoming virtuous.

At first glance none of these positions seems right. The first is cast into doubt by the everyday experience that most of us have of the martial arts; we have met people who study martial arts who seem to be good. The second possible relationship, that studying a martial art might help us to become virtuous, seems puzzling. How is it that learning how to cause damage to the human body in an efficient and methodical manner can help us to become virtuous? Causing such damage seems to be something that virtuous people should not do, except perhaps under very limited circumstances. Finally, the

idea that learning these things can have no relationship to being good also seems not quite right. Whether we are good people is determined, at least in large part, by what we do, and those of us who study martial arts regularly practice doing things that we generally ought not to do.

## 2 On virtue

Before we can talk about how practicing a martial art affects our virtue, we need to clarify the nature of virtue and determine how we can become virtuous. Before looking more closely at the martial arts then, I will briefly go over some aspects of the conception of virtue that I will be working with in this chapter, focusing mainly on Aristotle.[2]

We can think of the virtues as having three different aspects. The first is that the virtues are dispositional states (Aristotle 1984, Book II). To have the virtue of courage, for example, is to be disposed to act in a courageous way. Furthermore, virtues are *stable* dispositions; a courageous person doesn't just have the disposition to be courageous on Tuesdays, or when it involves mortal combat, but rather is disposed to be courageous whenever courage is required. A virtue is not, however, merely a habit. For something to be a habit involves a degree of unthinking behaviour, or perhaps inflexibility. We can distinguish a virtue from a habit in two ways (Annas 1993, 51). First, a virtue is consciously chosen, and continuously chosen. When I decide to become courageous, I do so by choosing the courageous action rather than cowardly or reckless ones. To have the virtue of courage is simply to have built up over time a disposition to be courageous through choosing to perform courageous actions. Each of these actions is consciously chosen, unlike a habit. The actions are chosen for reasons, and it is these reasons that become more efficacious as one becomes more courageous. A virtue is thus a *rational* disposition.

The second way in which a virtue is different from a habit is that habits often cause actions unconsciously; when I twirl my pen I often find myself doing it rather than intentionally doing it. In the case of a virtue, however, one never just finds oneself performing a virtuous action; when I perform a virtuous action I always choose the action, and it is this choice that results in the action rather than the virtue. 'The disposition is not a causal force making me choose; it is the way I have made myself, the way I have chosen to be, and in deciding in accordance with it, I endorse the way I have become' (Annas 1993, 51).

The second aspect of virtues is that they have an affective element. For the ancients, the emotions are involved with the virtues in a number of ways, but for the purposes of this chapter I will just focus on two. The first is that the emotions were not seen as merely a hindrance to virtue, a view that is often ascribed to Kant.[3] Virtue, for the ancients, is to be distinguished from mere continence; the virtuous person's emotions accord with what they perceive to be the right thing, whereas in the merely continent person the emotions are often in conflict with what they perceive to be the right thing, and need to be overcome.

> We must take as a sign of states the pleasure or pain that supervenes on acts; for the man who abstains from bodily pleasures and delights in this very fact is temperate, while the man who is annoyed at it is self-indulgent, and he who stands his ground against things that are terrible and delights in this or at least is not pained is brave, while the man who is pained is a coward. For moral excellence is concerned with pleasures and pains...
>
> *Aristotle 1984, 1104 b 3–10*

A second way in which the emotions figure in virtue is that there is a right way to feel. The emotions are things that can be defective; not only can they be inappropriate, the wrong emotion to feel at the time, but they can also be had in the wrong amount:

> it is [moral excellence] that is concerned with passions and actions, and in these there is excess, defect, and the intermediate. For instance, both fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well; but to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right aim, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of excellence.
>
> *Aristotle 1984, 1106 b 16–23*

This idea of the right emotion being the 'intermediate and best' is what is often known as Aristotle's doctrine of the mean. This does not mean that the right emotion is always the one felt in moderation, although some of the ancients described it as such (Annas 1993, 61). Sometimes it will be appropriate to be very angry, and in such situations the emotions of the virtuous person will reflect this. For the purposes of this chapter, however, it is not necessary to focus on exactly how we should interpret this doctrine. What is important is just that, for the ancients, the virtuous person will not only do the right thing but also have the right emotions.

The third aspect of virtues is that they have an intellectual component. Aristotle often compared the virtues to skills, while the Stoics thought that virtue was a skill, albeit of a special kind.[4] What the skill analogy emphasizes is that being virtuous does not consist merely in doing the right thing, it also requires understanding. The virtuous person, unlike the merely lucky one, understands why it is that a particular action is the right one; she has reflected on her beliefs about what one ought to do and has come to an understanding of what makes them right. But just as there is no set of rules that one can follow in order to be a good musician, there is no corresponding set for virtue (Annas 1993, 71–72).

## 3 How to become virtuous or vicious

Once we know what virtue is, there arises a second question: how do we become virtuous? The answer that Aristotle gives us is that we become virtuous through mindful habituation. 'For the things we have to learn before we can do, we learn by doing, e.g. men become builders by building and lyre-players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts' (Aristotle 1984, 1103 a 32–1103 b 2). Of course, this just leads us to another question: how can we act in accord with the virtues if we are not virtuous? How do we know which actions are the virtuous ones? It is here that virtue ethicists typically stress the importance of role models. One can come to see the reasons that underlie virtue, and so come to see which actions are virtuous, by doing as the virtuous person does.

Just as acting virtuously leads to virtue, so acting viciously leads to vice:

> But perhaps a man is the kind of man not to take care. Still they are themselves by their slack lives responsible for becoming men of that kind, and men are themselves responsible for being unjust or self-indulgent, in that they cheat or spend their time in drinking bouts and the like; for it is activities exercised on particular objects that make the corresponding character.
>
> *Aristotle 1984, 1114 a 3–7*

To act in a way that is vicious will serve to mould one's character so that one becomes vicious. Virtue then, is only achieved by acting virtuously and not acting viciously.

## 4 The peril

This section will examine whether the martial arts can be dangerous to one's virtue, or, to be more precise, whether they can make it more difficult to become virtuous. The main focus of this section will be the presence of violence within the martial arts and the potential impact that this might have on the practitioner's character.

At least part of the reason that acting viciously leads to vice and acting virtuously to virtue is that acting in those ways involves us taking as good reasons the goals of the actions; accepting these reasons then provides us with a structure for viewing and evaluating the world. Studying a martial art then provides us with one way of seeing the world, and it is a way that involves violence at its core. As a result, when we encounter potentially hostile situations, those of us who practice modes of violence may be more likely to use violence, even where it is inappropriate. Thus practicing violence can make us violent people, that is, people who are disposed to use violence:

> Again, it is from the same causes and by the same means that every excellence is both produced and destroyed, and similarly every art; for it is from playing the lyre that both good and bad lyre-players are produced. And the corresponding statement is true of builders and of all the rest; men will be good or bad builders as a result of building well or badly. ... This, then, is the case with the excellences also; by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust, and by doing the acts that we do in the presence of danger, and being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly.
>
> *Aristotle 1984, 1103 b 7–17*

In a similar way, it is through violence that we become violent. Through violence we come to develop the disposition to use violence, and so are more likely to use violence in situations in which we would not otherwise have used it. We also come to take pleasure from violence and the infliction of pain. An example of this is the pleasure that can be had from the proper execution of an arm-lock or similar technique. Such techniques, however, usually result in pain for those on whom the techniques are performed. It is easy to say that the pleasure arises out of the proper execution of the technique, and no doubt there is something to this, but I suspect that in many cases it is also a result of the power and control that is exercised, the domination that is exerted, over others. The pain is in many ways an end that we are trying to bring about.

The risk then that seems to be plausibly associated with practicing a martial art is that, given that such practice involves violence, or at least quasi-violence, we risk becoming violent people. Such actions develop in us the disposition to be violent. It also involves as part of the disposition the taking of pleasure in the violence; no longer are we repelled by the thought of it, but rather the violence is linked to pleasure.

I want to look at two possible responses to this line of argumentation. The first response is to say that it may be that there would be something wrong if, when we were practicing a martial art, we were being violent, but this is not an accurate description of what happens. Rather, when practicing our martial arts we are merely *practicing* violence. One might think then that merely practicing to do something does not have the same effects as being violent. It does not engender in us a disposition to use violence, and does not shape our emotions and cognition in the associated ways. The fact that we are one step removed from the violence ensures that we are not affected in the same way.

There is certainly a difference between simulated violence and real violence, but this difference alone does not alleviate the above concern. One way of seeing this is by analogy. Imagine that someone you knew was assiduously learning to steal well, or perhaps learning the ancient art of kidnapping. I don't think that we are likely to just say 'oh they're just practicing—nothing wrong with that.' Rather, we are likely to think that there is something disturbing about their activity. Even if the people in question aren't actually stealing or kidnapping, the fact that they are practicing in order to be able to do these

things well seems concerning. Perhaps we think it is a worry because we see this as a manifestation of an existing desire to do wrong. But it also strikes me that, regardless of whether they have this prior desire, we think that such practice also makes it more likely that such people will do these things in the future. Indeed, when I was discussing this chapter with a colleague of mine, she expressed concern about the possibility that one of her children might one day want to practice a martial art. She was concerned for exactly the reason that I have been exploring here, that such practice may well shape her child's character in a bad way.

An interesting analogy here is the case of playing violent video games. Recent studies that have been done on the link between playing violent video games and violent behaviour have shown that there is a significant relationship between the two.

> The effect of exposure to violent video games on subsequent aggressive behavior in children ... is larger than: (a) the effect of exposure to passive tobacco smoke on lung cancer; (b) the effect of calcium intake on bone mass; and (c) the effect of homework on academic achievement.
>
> *Anderson 2003, 155*[5]

If there is a significant link between playing violent video games and aggressive behaviour, then it seems plausible to think that there would be a significant link between practicing a martial art and aggressive behaviour; if anything, the violence seems closer in the case of the martial arts than it does in the case of video games. It is also of interest that the evidence for a relationship between aggression and merely watching violence, for example on television, is less strong than that between video games and aggressiveness (Polman et al. 2008). One plausible explanation for this is the interactive nature of video games, the fact that when I play one I am causing the violence to happen, and so I am responsible for the greater effect. But if so, this again seems to give us reason to think that even the simulated violence that we engage in when we practice a martial art can have serious repercussions on our character.

I also think that this response is just untrue to at least many martial arts. Many martial arts train in a way that *is* violent, albeit usually of a restrained sort. The violence is an important element of the training, since part of the point of the training is to ensure that one knows how to respond to violence. But such a response can only really be learned by simulating such situations. Perhaps the clearest cases of these are martial arts such as kickboxing or boxing, where one spars with an opponent. But it is certainly not unique to them. One of the martial arts that Ellis Amdur, who I quoted at the start of this chapter, trains in and teaches is Araki-ryu. Here is his description of what the training sometimes involves:

> Araki-ryu, my primary study, always prided itself on its realistic, no-nonsense methods of close combat. Battle in the raw: no prettiness, no

> aesthetic flourishes, just gut-wrenching survival by any means necessary. Being a so-called classical martial tradition, the principal method of training was pre-arranged forms. However, we sometimes did freestyle training with oaken weapons, as close to the edge as we were willing to go. This necessitated trying to pull or redirect our blows at the very last second. My instructor's injunction was, "we are trying to kill each other, but somehow we must not hurt each other." Although there were only occasional minor injuries (bruises, broken fingers, a concussion or two), it was a very frightening way to practice, and I often approached the dojo with my mouth dry and my stomach in knots.
>
> *Amdur 2000, 112*

The point of such training is, at least in part, to try and learn to react under the stress induced by the possibility of imminent harm. But in order to learn this there must be the possibility of harm. Thus, at best, this response could only apply to those martial arts that do not train in this sort of manner.

The second response to the peril that I am discussing here is to focus on the fact that violence does seem to be legitimate in some cases. Few of us, after all, want to say that violence is never justified; if I am attacked on the street, for example, it might well be morally permissible for me to use whatever martial skills I have to defend myself. The claim then would be that, although the martial arts do involve violence, they are such that they only help us to act well within the spheres of action where violence is legitimate, but do not have the general effect that I have been discussing. This response then seeks to differentiate the practice of the martial arts from the practice of such activities as thievery and kidnapping by claiming that there is a legitimate sphere of use.

There are two reasons to doubt that this response manages to defeat the concern. The first is that it seems like a claim that needs to be justified, and until such time as it is, it seems rather weak. The second reason why the response fails is that it may also be the case that some of the skills that one learns while studying thievery and kidnapping may also have permissible uses. If, for instance, a pickpocket takes my wallet, then it seems as though I am perfectly justified in picking his pocket in order to get my wallet back. Likewise, kidnapping skills may be legitimately used if they can prevent the imminent abuse of a child, or achieve a comparably desirable end. Furthermore, having a developed understanding of how to steal and kidnap also enables one to take effective steps to ensure that one is not stolen from or kidnapped. Just as when we are studying a martial art we learn how to defend ourselves from those who would seek to hurt us, at least in part by coming to understand which types of attacks are likely to be able to hurt us, so too an understanding of how to steal will enable us to take steps to prevent thieves from entering our homes, or picking our pockets or whatever; an understanding of the tactics used help us to prevent them being effective against us. The problem with the response then is that it seems that a similar response can be made for just about any activity, but if so then the response seems to prove too much.

It seems then as though the worry is not defeated by either of these responses. In contrast to the optimistic views expressed at the start of this chapter regarding the link between practicing a martial art and the cultivation of a noble character, we seem to have good reason to believe that such activities may instead lead us towards vice.

## 5 The promise

The previous section examined the peril that may be inherent in practicing a martial art. In this section I will look at how such practice may benefit us through facilitating our path to virtue.[6] I will focus primarily, but not exclusively, on the example of courage, since that seems to be the virtue that is most relevant in this case. As described above, to be virtuous is to have the stable disposition to behave in accord with virtue. To be courageous, for example, is to have a stable disposition to act courageously, which disposition is underpinned by an understanding of the grounds of courage. I want to suggest that the study of a martial art can encourage in us a stable disposition of the right sort in at least three ways: by providing us with situations in which to act courageously, by engendering self-control in us, and by helping us to understand that some things are not to be feared.

The first way in which a martial art can help one become more virtuous relates to the claim that I made in the previous section, that the study of some martial arts includes at least a circumscribed use of violence. Recall that according to Aristotle, the way in which one becomes virtuous is through acting virtuously; one becomes courageous, for example, by acting courageously in situations that call for it. Many martial arts place their students under situations of stress in order to train them to be able to react appropriately in such situations. Such training, although it occurs in a controlled setting, helps to develop in people the dispositions that are constitutive of courage.[7]

This point is parallel to the one about the link between violence and vice set out above. In that case, I argued that it seems like violence can impact on our character even when it is only simulated violence rather than actual violence. Although there is no necessary connection here, it seems like there is the risk that through practicing violence we may become violent. In the same way, it is by practicing to react well to violence that we can learn to be courageous. It is the threat and actuality of violence within the martial arts then that both allows the cultivation of courage, and contains the peril of vice. The aim then should be to benefit from the opportunity that the violence offers without succumbing to the possibility of vice.

The second way in which a martial art can help us to become virtuous is through the development of self-control. When we are practicing a martial art, and in particular when we are practicing with a partner, we are expected to show self-control. To do otherwise is to place one's partner at risk of serious injury. This is especially true of weapons training; although it may hurt to be punched, the possibility of serious injury is magnified when weapons are being

used. Although one is expected to show self-control throughout one's training, usually one is expected to show more and more control as one progresses, not least because the techniques that one is using tend to become more and more dangerous. Thus, it is usually expected that as one's training continues, one's ability to control oneself will improve.

Just as practicing acting courageously helps one to become courageous, so practicing self-control will help one become self-controlled. The expectation that in one's training one will exercise and develop self-control then, combined with the opportunities that one has to exercise control, lead us to become self-controlled. It seems plausible then to expect that training in the martial arts will help us develop self-control. It also seems plausible to think that this self-control will not be restricted to one's practice of the martial arts. Although such training usually focuses on self-control in a particular context, it at least provides us with a template for self-control in other situations. It is at least intuitively plausible that this self-control will manifest itself in other areas of one's life.

As Aristotle makes clear, however, self-control is not full virtue. Although it is better to be self-controlled than not, the continent person is less than fully virtuous; the virtuous person is such that his dispositions and emotions conform to virtue. Virtue, however, is not something that is developed at the snap of a finger; it requires hard and continuous work. In the beginning, becoming virtuous will involve emulating the actions of those who one sees as models, without necessarily understanding the reasons for what they do, and certainly not involving the right emotions. As she begins to see the reasons for virtue, and adopt them as her own, the aspiring sage will come to act more and more like the virtuous person, in that her reasons will come to be those of the virtuous person. There will be many occasions, however, in which self-control is necessary, since either her emotions, or perhaps the reasons that she formerly took as good, will tempt her to act immorally. In these situations, self-control is necessary; the continent person, who is at a stage on the way to virtue, is a person who has self-control, since she is not led astray by these conflicting reasons and emotions. Gradually, by taking the reasons of the virtuous person as her own, she will come to be virtuous. Self-control then seems to be an important step towards virtue. To the extent that they help us develop such control then, the martial arts are able to facilitate the path to virtue.

The final way in which a martial art can help us to become virtuous is linked to fear. In his discussion of the virtue of courage, Aristotle tells us that there are some things that we are normally afraid of that the courageous person will not be afraid of, but that there are also things that even the courageous person fears. The courageous person will, for example, be afraid of disgracing himself. Unlike those of us who are not virtuous, however, the courageous person will not be afraid of many of those things that appear fearful to us, such as poverty, disease, and even death at sea (Aristotle 1984, 1115 a 10–15, 27–30).

> Properly, then, he will be called brave who is fearless in face of a noble death, and of all emergencies that involve death; and the emergencies of war are in the highest degree of this kind. Yet at sea also, and in disease, the brave man is fearless, but not in the same way as the seamen; for he has given up hope of safety, and is disliking the thought of death in this shape, while they are hopeful because of their experience.
>
> *Aristotle 1984, 1115 a 32–1115 b 3*

A significant part of what it is to become brave then is to learn not to fear what ought not to be feared. At the same time, it is to learn to love what is fine and noble, and to act for the sake of it.

> The man, then, who faces and who fears the right things and with the right aim, in the right way and at the right time, and who feels confidence under the corresponding conditions, is brave; for the brave man feels and acts according to the merits of the case and in whatever way reason directs.
>
> *Aristotle 1984, 1115 b 18–20*

Being courageous is difficult for at least two reasons. The first is that we have to act appropriately even when we are afraid, since even the courageous person is afraid in some circumstances. The second way in which it is difficult is that being courageous requires that we do not fear many of the things that we, the non-virtuous, typically fear. Part of what distinguishes the courageous person from us is that they no longer have the belief that certain things should be feared.

Practicing a martial art can help us to become virtuous by helping us both to act when we are afraid, and to help us to learn that some things are not in themselves worthy of being feared. Establishing that training in the martial arts is able to help us to act when we are afraid is fairly straightforward. When we are placed in situations that we find induce fear in us, and yet act despite this fear, we become the type of person who is able to act in the face of fear. Usually martial arts are structured so that one is not placed in such extreme situations until one is very advanced; instead, the level of stress and fear is graduated, so that one is able to deal with increasing levels of fear.

That a martial art is able to help us learn that some things are not in themselves worthy of fear is not as evident. The example that I have in mind for this is pain. Usually, people see pain as something that is in itself bad, and so to be avoided. When we train in the martial arts, however, we experience many instances of pain that are not necessarily seen as bad. When teaching a person how to do an arm-lock, for instance, one of the main ways in which you judge that it is being done properly is by whether there is pain; pain here is not something to be avoided, but is rather something that one is trying to bring about. In such situations, then, we learn that pain is not in itself something to be feared.

Another example comes again from Ellis Amdur. He recounts that on a number of occasions he found himself training in Aikido with a former professional kick-boxer:

> Every time I tried to apply the technique, he seemed to resist, and I would deliver an "atemi" to his head, stopping short at the last second. However, he ignored the threatening blow, and continued not to move. I said, "You have to move. I am (theoretically) hitting you in the head."
>
> He smiled at me scornfully and said, "But from that angle, with that blow, you could not hurt me. Why should I move?"
>
> *Amdur 2000, 45*

Unlike what most of us believe, the kick-boxer has learned that some blows, such as the ones that Amdur was attempting to execute, are not to be feared. That is not, of course, to say that the kick-boxer is virtuous; the scorn that he expresses suggests otherwise. Nonetheless, he understands something that most of us do not, and this understanding is a result of his training. Such understanding is a part of what courage is; the courageous person will not be afraid of those things that will not cause harm.

## 6 The empirical evidence

In the previous two sections I have suggested that there are reasons to believe both that the practice of a martial art might lead to the cultivation of character traits that are vicious and that such practice might lead to the cultivation of traits that are virtuous. The practice of a martial art then seems to have the potential to cause both virtue and vice. It is interesting to note that some empirical work has been done on the effects of martial arts practice. There have been two main groups of studies (Vertonghen and Theeboom 2010, 530–533). Studies in the first group seek to determine whether there is a link between martial arts and aggression, while studies in the second group seek to determine whether studying a martial art leads to positive changes in personality. I will briefly describe each group in turn.

A number of studies have concluded that modern martial arts, which focus primarily on technique, lead to increased aggressiveness whereas traditional martial arts, which also include the study of *kata*, meditation, and philosophy actually lead to reduced aggressiveness (Nosanchuk 1981; Trulson 1986; Nosanchuk and MacNeil 1989; Najafi 2003, cited Vertonghen and Theeboom 2010, 530; Lamarre and Nosanchuk 1999). Other studies, however, suggest that the practice of even traditional martial arts can either lead to increased aggressiveness, or at best have no effect on aggressiveness (Reynes and Lorant 2002; Reynes and Lorant 2004). Although the number of studies concluding that at least some forms of martial arts lead to decreased aggressiveness is greater than the number of studies concluding that there is either no effect or a negative effect on aggressiveness, the presence of such dissenting studies

means that we cannot yet unconditionally accept the positive conclusions of the former studies (Vertonghen and Theeboom 2010, 533).

In addition to the studies on aggression, there have also been a number of studies which have investigated the link between the study of martial arts and self-esteem, hopefulness, and self-confidence (Vertonghen and Theeboom 2010, 529–532). In general, the results have shown that the study of a martial art does have a positive effect on such traits; studying a martial art is associated with higher levels of self-esteem, hopefulness and self-confidence. Such changes in personality are clearly good, and a life in which these are present is, *pro tanto*, a better life than one which lacks them. We need to be careful, however, in making a link between having these character traits and being virtuous. Having high self-confidence, self-esteem and being hopeful is consistent with a vicious character. Indeed a person suffering from narcissistic personality disorder exhibits these traits, yet such a person 'approaches people as objects to be used up and discarded according to his or her needs, without regard for their feelings' (Gabbard 2000, 465). As a result, we cannot conclude that martial arts make people more virtuous merely because they engender traits that are in general good. Some activities may cultivate such traits in people yet also cultivate in them vicious traits; hence we cannot make a simple leap to the claim that such activities make their practitioners better people.

It would seem then that neither group of studies provides us with uncontroversial evidence of a link between studying a martial art and either virtue or vice. While most studies may indicate a positive relationship between studying a martial art and aspects of character, the presence of contradictory studies and the gap between these aspects of character and virtue or vice means that no firm conclusions can yet be drawn. Given the theoretical considerations discussed above, it is perhaps not surprising that the empirical results are unclear, as both virtue and vice appear to be plausible outcomes from the study of the martial arts.

## 7 Conclusion

The idea that martial arts are beneficial to their practitioners is a part of the self-conception of at least many martial arts. In this chapter I have argued that there are reasons to believe that this self-conception may be erroneous; it is plausible that studying a martial art may in fact lead to vice rather than virtue. For those of us who study martial arts, this is something that should give us pause. I have also tried to outline how the study of a martial art may lead to improvements in one's character. It may be, however, that any beneficial impact from training in a martial art stems not from the martial art itself but rather from the social norms and expectations that often accompany such training. As I have been trying to focus on those elements of the martial arts that are constitutive, in whole or in part, of martial arts I have not explored this possibility. The question as to whether training in the martial arts tends to

lead to virtue or to vice does not yet have a clear answer. Until the answer is found, martial artists have good reason to be wary of the effects of their practice.[8]

## Notes

1 Koryu, sometimes referred to as *kobudō*, are generally defined as Japanese martial arts established prior to the Meiji revolution (i.e. 1868). See Yokose (2011) and Armstrong (1997, 19–21).
2 For a comparison of Eastern and Western conceptions of virtue as applied to the martial arts and sport, see Reid (2010).
3 For a discussion of Kant's view of the emotions, see Sherman (1997).
4 For a discussion of the skill analogy, see Annas (2011, Chapter 3).
5 For a more recent overview of the literature, see Anderson et al. (2012).
6 For an alternative account of how practicing a martial art might lead to virtue, see Bäck (2009).
7 I will return to this when discussing the emotions.
8 Thanks to Cordelia Fine, Rebecca Hill, Liam Keeley, two anonymous reviewers and the audience at a conference on Philosophy and the Martial Arts at the University of Melbourne for comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

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# 2

# PRACTICING EVIL

## Training and psychological barriers in the martial arts

*Gillian Russell*

> It is a mistake to look at evil doers' desires: they are generally like everyone else's.
> *Adam Morton,* On Evil

An important, but sometimes neglected, aspect of learning to fight is learning to overcome psychological barriers against harming others. Though there are some interesting exceptions, most human beings experience significant internal resistance to doing harm to other people (Marshall 1947, Grossman 1995, Morton 2004, Jensen 2012). Whatever its moral properties, this reluctance to harm can compromise the ability to fight effectively and hence one might think—and, as we will see, the designers of modern military training programmes and some martial arts schools do think—that combat training should help trainees overcome such barriers.

However, on one compelling theory of evil, what makes an action evil, as opposed to merely wrong, is that it is made possible by the agent's use of learned or innate strategies to overcome the natural barriers to harming others (Morton 2004, 34–68). If this is right, it poses a *prima facie* moral challenge to these aspects of fight-training. The challenge is a special case of a more general one, namely, how it could be morally permissible to make people better at harming others? That is a question that martial artists rarely take seriously. Indeed, it is commonly thought that becoming a martial artist, and teaching the martial arts, are morally supererogatory. This chapter takes the special challenge seriously, and looks at what can be said in response.

Sections 1–5 examine the evidence that barriers to harm exist, the content of the barrier theory of evil, and the kinds of training which are employed to help students overcome their resistance to harming others. The challenge is then articulated in section 6 and in the remaining sections (7–9) I consider three responses. The first two are commonly heard in the martial arts, but I

will argue that both are mistaken. The last is more unusual, but also, I will argue, more promising: it proposes that such training could at least be suitable for some *women*, on the grounds that the social environment in which they have grown up is responsible for a debilitatingly high barrier to harm in the first place.

## 1 Barriers

Human beings have psychological barriers against various actions, for example: approaching the edges of cliffs, stealing, handling corpses, standing too close during conversation, eating rotten food, handling snakes, or speaking in public. This class of barriers is quite diverse. Some—like those concerning conversational distance—may vary with culture, upbringing and individual history. Others—like fear of heights—are plausibly innate and good candidates for evolutionary explanation. Many are probably a mixture of the two.[1] Some barriers can be given rational justifications; they help us navigate the world more—if not perfectly—safely. Others, like reluctance to speak in public, suggest that we might sometimes want to change or remove barriers—if we are able.

Having a psychological barrier against performing an action is not the same as lacking motivation to do it. One might lack motivation to unload the dishwasher, without having a *barrier* against doing it the way I have against standing on the edge of a high cliff. In the case of the high cliff, even when I am not feeling depressed or lazy, even when I *want* to do it and have decided to do it, I still feel some resistance which it takes some effort to overcome. But having a barrier is not quite the same as being *afraid* to do something either (except on an especially permissive reading of 'afraid'). Though fear can be one way in which a barrier is realised, my barrier against getting a laugh during lectures by humiliating my students is not strongly associated with fear. I just wouldn't normally contemplate an action which I knew would cause humiliation, I shy away from it if it does occur to me, and I am filled with sympathy and remorse on the occasions when I accomplish it by accident.

Another important general feature of barriers is that one can learn to overcome them. As one does so, it requires less and less effort to perform the action. Eventually, performing the action can even be pleasurable. To adapt one of Morton's examples, consider the novice climber who is afraid of heights, but who gradually braves higher and higher drops, so that on each occasion he experiences 'a strangely elated sensation, not from the experience of the heights, but from the satisfaction of facing down [his] terror' (Morton 2004, 43). Overcoming a barrier can even be morally virtuous; a young coroner could be genuinely praiseworthy for overcoming her resistance to cutting up dead bodies.

The concept of a barrier is, admittedly, neither a recent nor a scientific one; it belongs to ordinary talk about the psychological, as do those expressed by terms like 'belief', 'desire' and 'intention'. No doubt neuroscience can do a

good job of clarifying and refining our understanding of the mechanisms which underlie barriers. But talk of barriers, like talk of beliefs and desires—is useful for characterising some interesting and apparently robust phenomena of everyday life and this is sufficient to licence us in talking about them here.

## 2 Barriers to harming

This chapter focuses on the narrower class of barriers to harming others. I use 'harming' as a broad term covering three things: humiliating, physically injuring, and killing.[2] I claim that there are widespread psychological barriers against harming, though I don't claim that *everyone* has them, since there are data which suggest that a small percentage of people simply don't. For example, according to the Swank and Marchland study from World War II, about 2 per cent of combat soldiers fell into this category (Grossman 1995, 180–182).[3]

It is consistent with having a barrier to harm that one might sometimes enjoy harming. Indeed, many combat veterans report a brief feeling of elation immediately after killing (Grossman 1995, Chapter 4). It is also consistent with a barrier that one might fantasise about harming; many a frustrated human being has imagined with pleasure what it would be like to grind an annoying family member into dust. (See also Amdur 2000, 67.) So my claim is that even though it is normal to fantasise about harming others, and even though it is normal to feel elated immediately after harming, it is *also* normal to feel resistance to doing it, a resistance which is manifest in the behaviour of most human beings. That this is true is far from obvious, and I will present some evidence for the claim.

In recent years the barrier to killing has become an important concern in military training. Pioneering work in this area was done by SLA Marshall and reported in his 1947 monograph *Men Against Fire*. The book includes the story of his initial discovery:

> in the Malkin Island fight, which was a part of the Gilbert Islands invasion in November, 1943, one battalion of the 165th Infantry regiment was stoutly engaged all along the front of its defensive perimeter throughout the third night [...] The frontal gun positions were all directly assaulted with sword and bayonet. Most of the killing took place at less than a ten-yard interval. Half of the American guns were knocked out and approximately half of the occupants of the forward foxholes were either killed or wounded. Every position was ringed with enemy dead.
>
> When morning brought the assurance that the defensive position had weathered the storm and the enemy had been beaten back by superior fire, it seemed certain to those of us who were close enough to it to appraise the action that all concerned must have acted with the utmost boldness. For it was clear that the whole battalion was alive to the danger

> and that despite its greatly superior numbers, it had succeeded by none too wide a margin. We began the investigation to determine how many of our men had fought with their weapons. It was an exhaustive search, man by man and gun crew by gun crew, each man being asked exactly what he had done.
>
> Yet making allowances for the dead, we could identify only 36 men as having fired at the enemy with all weapons. The majority were heavy weapons men. The really active firers were usually in small groups working together. There were some men in the positions directly under attack who did not fire at all or attempt to use a weapon even when the position was being overrun.
>
> *Marshall 1947, 55–56*

Marshall widened his investigation 'through many companies with varying degrees of battle experience, in the Pacific and in Europe.' Summing up the results, he wrote:

> The thing is simply this, that out of an average one hundred men along the line of fire during the period of an encounter, only fifteen men on the average would take any part with the weapons. This was true whether the action was spread over a day, or two days, or three. The prolonging of the engagement did not add appreciably to the numbers. [...] Terrain, the tactical situation, and even the nature of the enemy and the accuracy of his fire appeared to have almost no bearing on the ratio of active firers to non-firers. Nor did the element of battle experience through three or four campaigns produce any such radical change as might be expected. The results appeared to indicate that the ceiling was fixed by some constant which was inherent in the nature of troops or perhaps in our failure to understand that nature sufficiently to apply the proper correctives.
>
> *Marshall 1947, 57*

Further research has shown the failure to harm to be even more widespread. For even among the percentage of people who use their weapons, not all will aim to harm. Grossman catalogues many stories in which combatants explain how they outwitted their officers by firing high, and many studies in which the casualties from a battle have been shown to be significantly lower than would be expected, given the situation and the number of rounds fired. For example, in one 1986 British Defence Operational Analysis Establishment study, more than a hundred nineteenth and twentieth century battles were examined in trials in which soldiers carried laser pulsed weapons (and hence had no real concern about killing or being killed.) The study concluded that the actual historical casualty rates were much lower than the real killing potential in these circumstances, and the researchers' conclusion openly supported Marshall's non-firer's thesis (Grossman 1995, 12–16).

The barrier to harming humans is not restricted to killing. Combat sports like boxing, kick-boxing, muay thai, and mixed martial arts tournaments like K1, Pancrase or UFC all provide examples of competitions where athletes win *by* harming their opponents.[4] There are significant differences among the injury rates and standard kinds of injury in these sports. Injuries vary with rules, rule enforcement, ringside medical care, weight-classes and ages of fighters. But typical boxing injuries, for example, include bruising and cuts, especially around the eyebrows and eyelids, lips and gums, bloodied or broken noses, cracked ribs, dislocated or fractured jaws, broken teeth, cauliflower ears and various kinds of neurological damage (which, in less serious cases, may be transient). The more prolonged the involvement in boxing, the more the dominant mode of injury is neurological damage, with older or retired boxers developing a collection of symptoms that is folkily referred to as 'punch drunk syndrome' (*dementia pugilistica*), a chronic condition whose symptoms include intellectual impairment, headache, dizziness, impairment of vision, euphoria, 'fatuousness' and defective emotional control. Rare but serious acute injuries include fractured skulls and intercranial haemorrhaging, detached retinas, and death (Blass et al. 1963). Kick-boxers, too, stand a good chance of closed brain injury, with the pituitary gland and associated hormonal control of metabolism being one of the areas that is known to be affected. One study found that 27 per cent of kick-boxers were deficient in one or more of the hormones controlled by this region, suggesting that the long-term effects of kick-boxing are widely underestimated, much as they have been in youth sports, and in college and professional American football (Tanriverdi et al. 2007).

There are non-trivial injury rates in many non-combat sports and some of these—like the lower limb injury rates in soccer and basketball—would probably surprise and worry a general audience. Yet what distinguishes the combat sports above is not the injuries themselves but the fact that injury is not a side-effect of playing; rather, it is *how* one wins. Essentially you win by harming your opponent, consistently with certain rules. A boxer who is reluctant to hit someone in the head is compromised *qua boxer*. So if there is a psychological barrier to harming, we might expect to find it here.

The boxing literature records many instances of boxers who struggled to overcome a reluctance to harm:

> My trainer says when I'm sparring I don't look like I want to hurt my man. 'You gotta want to hurt him, because he's sure going to hurt you.' I'm afraid my lack of bloodlust stems from a fear of going too far, physically and/or mentally. However far I push myself in the gym something in me is holding me back.[5]
>
> *Oates 1987, 112*

Those who train in a martial arts form that does not encourage this kind of tournament will still have to overcome barriers to certain kinds of action. I teach a martial arts class to a group of intelligent, mild-mannered college

students. We have an intake of new students each year, and *even though they have come to the class in order to learn how to fight*, asking them to do anything slightly aggressive—for example, standing too close and staring, yelling while shoving their partner backwards, or punching at their face—provokes a storm of low-level resistance. Beginners will attempt to undermine the aggression of the actions by making jokes, put off the moment by nervously asking 'ah, where do I put my hands?' and shut their eyes as they punch (almost like someone shutting their eyes as they jump off a high diving board). Asking them to finish a throw by mounting their partner and pretending to strike them in the head provokes nervous giggling. To be clear, I am happy to teach such students; I merely mean to observe that even these mildly aggressive acts are ones which they feel an initial resistance to performing. Similar observations are common:

> Sonia caught me a good, solid elbow in the mouth.
> She jumped away. "I'm sorry! Are you okay?"
> "Yeah! That was great!"
> "It was too hard."
> "No it wasn't. It was exactly what you're supposed to do. I'm teaching you to hit people. I expect to get hit occasionally."
> "I don't want to hurt you."
> "Then you really are in the wrong class. Sonia, you have permission to hurt me. You're here to learn how to hurt someone."
>
> *Miller 1964, 146*

There is one area of the martial arts where reluctance to harm is sometimes addressed explicitly, and that is in self-defence and rape prevention courses for women. Trainees in such courses sometimes express their reluctance to harm:

> I just attended a seminar on how to prevent rape. They told me to fight back. Squeeze his testicles, scratch his eyes. Jab him in the groin and try to kill him...I can't do it...I'd rather be raped.
>
> *Cummings 1992, 187*

Since this aspect of the problem is widely recognised, courses which fail to address the issue come in for criticism:

> [The instructors] often fail to understand how thoroughly women have been socialized to be nonaggressive and to not hurt others. Thus they neglect to help women develop the belief that they have the right to hurt someone who is trying to hurt them. Hence, these courses may provide women with some physical defense skills, but often not the will to actually use those skills.
>
> *Searles and Follansbee 1984, 65*

When our topic was military training to kill, we did not need to rely upon anecdotes to establish our claim. There were systematic studies that could be called upon to demonstrate the existence of a psychological barrier to killing. But when we extend our focus to include martial arts training to harm more generally, there is little data beyond common observations and anecdotes. This is probably linked to a certain taste for magical thinking in the martial arts (the home of touchless knockouts and *chi*-development) and also to a lack of centralised funding for such studies. But the more general topic of violence in humans has caught the interest of scientists, and there is research here which bears on our topic. Robert Blair's work on violent criminals has led to his claim that normal individuals have a Violence Inhibiting Mechanism (VIM). Some of the evidence for the existence of this mechanism comes from the fact that certain kinds of brain damage are associated with an increase in violent behaviour. And, as we will see in a later section, one of the most compelling arguments for the existence of a psychological barrier to harm is the fact that there are specific psychological methods that may be used to overcome it.

## 3 The barrier theory of evil

The barrier theory of evil says that evil acts are bad acts that are made possible by people using an innate or learned strategy to overcome barriers to harm. The theory is controversial, with some people thinking that evil, in the end, doesn't really exist, or is just a synonym for 'very bad'. But whether or not the definition is correct as a characterisation of *evil*, it certainly does identify a distinctive kind of wrong act, and this chapter will use the word 'evil' for such actions.

In the background the theory assumes a particular picture of the way people choose their actions. When a person makes a decision about what to do, they will consider a range of possible actions. For example, if I'm at work and want some coffee, I might walk to the closest coffee shop, bike to my favourite coffee shop or even dig out the instant coffee that haunts the back of my filing cabinet. I'll rule out some of these actions, and choose one. Yet there are some ways to get coffee that I don't even consider, even to rule out. It doesn't even occur to me to email my entire introductory logic class and promise an 'A' to the first student who brings me a coffee.

There is a good reason why I don't consider every *possible* action; it simply isn't the most efficient way to get around in the world. But on Morton's account, failure of the mechanisms that should have blocked *consideration* of actions which harm others is what evil is all about. The strict account is this: a person's act is evil *when it results from a strategy or learned procedure which allows that person's deliberations over the choice of actions not to be inhibited by barriers against considering harming or humiliating others that ought to have been in place*.

Morton thinks that we can develop strategies for overcoming barriers in general, not just barriers to harm. His description of a mountain climber overcoming a fear of heights provides a useful example:

> As a child you were afraid of heights, and wouldn't walk along a plank between two barrels. But your father forced you to accompany him to the edges of canyons, then to clamber down and up steep hillsides, then to rappel down cliffs and cross ravines on teetering rope bridges. At each stage something inside you screamed, but at each stage you ignored the scream and made yourself do it. And after each occasion you had a strangely elated sensation, not from the experience of the heights but from the satisfaction of facing down your terror. And then eventually you have changed, so that you can agree with the mountaineer Joe Simpson: "There is a perverse delight in putting oneself in a potentially dangerous situation, knowing that your experience and skill make you quite safe." [...] Climbers don't want anything different. They want excitement, and fear death, like everyone. But the fear doesn't inhibit the desire. Instead there is a special addictive thrill that comes from keeping the fear suppressed.
>
> *Morton 2004, 43–44*

This also provides a nice illustration of Morton's thesis (quoted at the start of this chapter) that it is not the *desires* of evil doers that make them different. They want what we mostly all want: status, comfort, power, excitement etc. Where they differ is in an ability to overcome inhibitions against certain ways of getting these.

## 4 Sociopaths, survivors, stockbrokers and serial killers

Morton identifies four ways in which a person can act in breach of a barrier. First, they may have been born without one. The paradigm case of this kind is the sociopath, who simply never feels the sympathy for others which makes most people reluctant to inflict harm. In this class we can place the 2 per cent of soldiers who feel no inhibition to killing. But this way of 'overcoming' barriers also explains our attributions of evil to the actions of aliens, demons and machines in fiction and the cinema. Their psychology is largely opaque to us, and as far as we can tell, they simply feel no resistance to doing us harm.

Second, sometimes something was done to the person that makes transgressing the barrier easier. A child who has gone through the process known as *violentisation*, usually as a result of surviving violent abuse or war, will instinctively reach for violence in social situations as a technique for resolving problems. The boxer Don Jordan seems to have been an example:

> "What's wrong with killing a human?" Jordan asked rhetorically in an interview. "The first time you kill someone, you throw up, you get sick as a dog...The second time, no feeling." According to his testimony Jordan killed or helped to kill more than thirty men in the Dominican Republic, without being caught. (He seems in fact to have been in the hire of the government.) After Jordan and his family moved to California he killed a

> man for "personal" reasons, for which crime he was sent to reform school, aged fourteen.
>
> *Oates 1987, 83*

A similar process operates on soldiers who are exposed to extreme violence at a later age. When the process occurs in adulthood it is frequently accompanied by severe post-traumatic stress (PTSD), the symptoms of which include violent outbursts, debilitating anxiety, feelings of guilt, reliving the traumatic experiences, and depression.

Third, a person's society may offer mechanisms for getting past the barrier. In societies where it is common for husbands to beat their wives into submission, there exist a variety of socially-recognised justifications, which any individual husband may use to smooth his way past the barrier to harming. Such methods often include dehumanisation of the victim ('women are less rational than men') and the provision of rationalisations for the violence ('it's for her own good', 'men have a *duty* to keep their household in order'). Societies which have condoned the institution of slavery, and in which slaves are routinely badly treated, provide mechanisms by which their members can dismiss worries about keeping and harming slaves: they are childlike and wouldn't survive on their own, it's a kindness to support and employ them, to rescue their heathen souls etc. Guards in Nazi concentration camps also dehumanised their victims, and portrayed their own harmful actions as necessary (Morton 2004).

There are also examples which are closer to home. The stockbroker who works in a culture in which he has many opportunities to deceive clients—including pension companies and charities—about the risks of certain investments may feel some resistance to the deception, especially when he thinks about the harm that can be done when a pension company collapses. But if he works in an environment in which such clients are commonly dehumanised and spoken of with contempt, where it is suggested that his victims somehow brought it on themselves, where he is told to do these things by someone in authority and rewarded for his actions with high status and bonuses, he is likely to find it easier to repress his resistance. Here he exploits socially provided mechanisms for overcoming a barrier to harm.

The last of Morton's ways past the barriers to harm is for a person to develop their own, personal strategy. Self-deception, often by way of self-distraction from the full reality of what one is doing, is one such strategy.

## 5 Overcoming barriers with training

I will now describe some of the ways in which people are trained to overcome barriers to harm when they are trained to fight. My examples will come both from the militaries of various countries and times—where there is sometimes quite a lot of useful data—and from civilian martial arts classes—where there are fewer studies, but still plenty of training manuals and anecdotes.

We saw that SLA Marshall's studies from World War II found that only 15 per cent of soldiers had fired on the enemy. When Marshall was asked to repeat that study during the Korean War (1950–1953), the results looked very different; 55 per cent of infantrymen were now firing at the enemy and by the time of the Vietnam War (1955–1975) that figure was 90–95 per cent. According to Grossman (1995), the explanation for the change is to be found in the way soldiers are trained. One of the most important factors is that training environments have been made more like the situations in which trainees will actually be ordered to kill and, crucially, the targets used during training are made to resemble other human beings more and more.

> Instead of lying prone on a grassy field calmly shooting at a bull's eye target, the modern soldier spends many hours standing in a foxhole, with full combat equipment draped about his body, looking over an area of lightly wooded rolling terrain. At periodic intervals one or two olive-drab, man-shaped targets at varying ranges will pop up in front of him for a brief time, and the soldier must instantly aim and shoot at the target(s). When he hits a target it provides immediate feedback by instantly and very satisfyingly dropping backward—just as a living target would. Soldiers are highly rewarded and recognised for success in this skill and suffer mild punishment (in the form of retraining, peer pressure, and failure to graduate from boot camp) for failure to quickly and accurately "engage" the targets—a standard euphemism for "kill". [...] On special occasions even more realistic and complex targets are used. Balloon-filled uniforms moving across the kill zone (pop the balloon and the target drops to the ground), red-paint-filled milk jugs, and many other ingenious devices are used.
>
> *Grossman 1995*

This strategy has been successful in improving ratios of fire. Grossman observes that it is a kind of operant conditioning; soldiers are conditioned to voluntarily produce a certain kind of action (firing at a person-like object) in response to a certain kind of stimulus. The stimulus situation includes orders to fire, the appearance of the target, and the presence of standard gear like uniforms and packs. It also provides practice at overcoming the barrier to harm, rather like the future mountain climber gradually learning to overcome his fear of heights. The more it seems as if you are harming a human target, the more likely you are to begin to find the situation disturbing or upsetting, which can trigger your barrier to harm.

Sometimes training for war has involved real killing:

> Yamamoto Kichizaemon was ordered by his father Jin'emon to cut down a dog at the age of five, and at the age of fifteen he was made to execute a criminal. Everyone, by the time they were fourteen or fifteen, was ordered to do a beheading without fail....If one investigates into the spirit

> of a man who finds these things disagreeable, one sees that this person gives himself over to cleverness and excuse-making not to kill because he feels unnerved. But Naoshige made it his orders exactly because this is something that must be done.
>
> *Tsunetomo 1979*

It would be nice to think that this was a rare thing. We can even cast doubt on the claim above. Yamamoto Tsunetomo wrote the *Hagakure* during the Tokugawa period (more specifically, in the early 1700s), a time of relative peace in Japan. In a memorable passage Grossman describes people studying killing as 'virgins studying sex' and suggests both that it is a subject with which we have a prurient fascination, and one about which people are given to lie and exaggerate (Grossman 1995, 2–3). Could the reports in the *Hagakure* simply be false? Perhaps. But regrettably there is still plenty of evidence that training for war has included forcing people to kill or harm others, since we know about the modern day training of hundreds of thousands of child soldiers. One survey of practices in Uganda found that 39 per cent had been forced to kill someone personally after being abducted by military units. Sixty-three per cent had to loot properties and burn the homes of civilians, 73 per cent witnessed someone being killed and 39 per cent had to abduct other children (Derluyn et al. 2004).

> I was abducted at night from my home on December 26, 1996, by the Lord's Resistance Army. On the way to Sudan, an abducted boy tried to escape. He was recaptured and I had to kill him, by beating him to death with sticks. One day, I was beaten seriously because I dropped a water container during a gunfire. In Sudan, I received military training for 1 month. I learned how to assemble and dismantle a gun. After that, I had to fight both UPDF [Uganda People's Defence Forces] in Uganda and SPLA [Sudan People's Liberation Army] in Sudan. Several times, I went to villages to loot food and abduct other children. One day, I was given to a commander as his wife. I got pregnant and delivered a boy. In a fight with UPDF, I managed to escape, but I had to leave my child in the bush. I don't know what happened to him.
>
> *Derluyn et al. 2004*

Trainees in a martial art in the first world are rarely expected to kill someone, but sometimes they are involved in other forms of harm. Cook's *Precise History of Shotokan* describes some of the Karate training at the Takushoku University during and immediately after World War II. His sources include the stories of students who were frightened to leave because they feared reprisals. Leavers were subjected to a 'ceremony of honour' at which they made their way down a line of students, who would each 'say goodbye' by striking him (Cook 2001, 111–112). One student is reported to have died as a result, though it is clear that this was unusual. Elsewhere the training is described: 'At Takushoku, training was based on being able to sustain blows without flinching. That was how our sempai tested the students' ability to endure physical pain which stops you

from concentrating when it is too intense... Blows, blows, more blows, that's how I learned karate!' (Cook 2001, 138).

Many contemporary martial arts groups are not like this. One might even think they aim at the *opposite*. Instead of encouraging realism, training is ritualised and stylised, and involves a great deal of special etiquette. There are opening ceremonies for classes and closing meditations. Trainees wear special white or indigo uniforms and engagements begin with a bow, and finish with prearranged signals, like tapping out, or a strike that doesn't really harm. One-person *kata* are learned and performed. Belts are tied one way, hakama another. Throws are onto crash pads, groundwork is done on mats, kicks are done barefoot and everyone knows implicitly that certain actions—like grabbing hair, kneeing someone in the groin, or pulling a weapon—are simply off the table. There is much about training in the average dojo that insulates students from the chaotic, hard to control reality of violence and replaces it with a hygienic, less disturbing counterfeit.

Sometimes this stylisation can help people to get started. For a new female student with a fear of sexual assault, it can be understandably alarming to suddenly find a strange man in her guard. An opening bow, a pristine uniform, and a teacher standing over her with a stopwatch all help to reassure her that this is just training and not itself a chaotically dangerous situation.

As noted above, even within ultra 'hygienic' dojo, some actions are psychologically disturbing until trainees become used to them. Examples include the *kiai*, striking towards the head, mounting someone, and throwing them on the ground. Drilling is an important aspect of martial arts training. Trainees are usually required to perform an action in response to a stimulus over and over again. Sometimes that stimulus is an attack of some kind, such as a grab or strike, sometimes just a shouted command.

But there are also martial arts groups who focus quite explicitly on increasing realism with the stated aim of invoking and then teaching students to deal with resistance to harm. Grossman describes one karate instructor who has his students practice eye-gouges by having the 'victim' tape half an orange over their eye-socket. Trainees then practice ramming their thumb into the orange, and swirling it around, in order to simulate gouging through the eye into the brain and doing as much damage as possible. The process is made more realistic by having the victim 'scream, twitch and jerk' in response.

Rather than insulating the trainee from the violence of an eye-gouge, this kind of training has the effect of making it horrifyingly obvious: 'Few individuals can walk away from their first such rehearsal without being badly shaken and disturbed by the action they have just mimicked. The fact that they are overcoming some sort of natural resistance is obvious' (Grossman 1995).

In a recent class that I attended students were introduced to knife-fighting by taking it in turns to pin a partner to the wall with a forearm across their throat and pump a training knife several times into their (padded) gut. Even though some of the stabbers and the stabbees were experienced blackbelts, accustomed to striking, throwing and choking each other, the group

spontaneously expressed being extremely disturbed by the drill. Pretending to stab someone was easy, fun even, but it was also troubling in a way that went well beyond any actual harm done.

So-called 'reality-based' groups are known for quite elaborate efforts to promote realism in training; 'attackers' may wear smelly clothing and rinse their mouths out with alcoholic beverages. Training spaces are set up in warehouses with 'random' weapons available to simulate fighting on unknown ground. Make-up and paint is used to simulate wounds (Wagner 2005). There is also a tendency (not clearly intensional) for some groups to dehumanise those seen as potential targets. Derogatory slurs are employed against the homeless, poor people, immigrants and the mentally ill.[6,7]

Some of the more extreme training methods described here—e.g. forced beatings and decapitation of criminals—clearly fall into Morton's category of violentisation. But some of the US Army's methods are not so easy to classify. Is making someone shoot realistic targets—but ultimately non-living ones—a way of violentising them? Or is it merely a kind of operant conditioning that circumvents the barrier to harm without violentisation, so that it is only later experiences in battle that complete the process? This is an important question, but I don't know the answer. I expect the place to look for one would be in the experiences of soldiers who go through realistic training to kill, but who are never sent to war.

## 6 The challenge

Overcoming barriers to harm is an important part of teaching someone to fight. To the extent that if a trainee is unable to overcome them when necessary, they will not be a good fighter. As we saw above, the main methods used are:

(i) violentisation—trainees are exposed to genuine examples of extreme violence, such as forcing them to kill at short-range. Our examples included the training of child soldiers in Uganda, the training described in the *Hagakure* and the training and hazing that took place in the post-war Shotokan dojo at Takushoku.
(ii) operant conditioning—trainees are drilled in the required action in response to stimuli, in situations which are realistic enough to invoke the resistance to harm. Examples include the US Army's use of human-like targets on firing ranges, use of orange halves to practice eye-gouges on partners who scream, twitch and jerk in response, as well as the reality-based movement in the martial arts.
(iii) dehumanisation of the target—training provides a social environment where targets are spoken of with contempt and as deserving of harm. Examples include the use of slurs for the enemy's racial group in the military, and some martial arts groups have a social environment in which certain groups deemed likely to be attackers, such as the mentally ill or poor, are spoken of with contempt.

Suppose that you are a civilian martial arts instructor with little interest in violentising your students, or in dehumanising anyone. From this perspective, the central lessons would seem to be: (i) that to do a good job of teaching human beings to fight one has to teach them to overcome their barrier to harm; and (ii) that this can be done effectively with drills which are realistic enough that students find them disturbing and difficult to perform because they *feel* as if they are harming someone. Such drills will improve your students' ability to fight, by improving their ability to do harm. That's the whole point of course, but what I want to ask now is whether it should be your goal.

It is important to note here that some actions which result in harm are not evil. Morton himself gives a straightforward example:

> Evil acts...will also have a lot in common with some acts that are very serious—they have atrocious consequences—but are not evil because they are not wrong. I am thinking of acts of justified violence. The simple examples are like the example of having to shoot someone to protect a child.
>
> *Morton 2004, 64*

Acts of justified violence—this is surely the stuff that the martial arts fantasies are made of. However, Morton immediately goes on:

> But there are harder cases. There are people whose motivation would lead to evil acts were they in other circumstances but by moral luck find themselves living lives in which their tendencies to harm work to the good. The obvious example is war, when to defend your country against attack you have to kill the attackers. Come peacetime, some genuine war heroes will find that the same tendencies that made them indispensable in resisting evil now put them in danger of committing evil themselves.

One issue is that a trainee whose psychology has become well-suited to a situation in which he can save a child by shooting someone may not be so well set up for *the rest* of his life. Much has been written about the challenges faced by war veterans. One issue is that an ex-combatant's conditioning and PTSD may cause him or her to overreact to certain stimuli—stress, loud noises, or even fights (Collins and Bailey 1990). Civilian society—perhaps especially middle-class civilian society—is not overly fond of people who appear to be dangerous. Someone who punches a client, or a co-worker, or who even seems as if he might, may find it difficult to keep a job.

But the particular concern I want to focus on is slightly different: that someone for whom violence is not categorically off the table anymore—someone for whom it is now a live option—may be more liable to lash out with violence in situations that would tempt just about *anyone* to lash out with violence: the car that arrogantly cuts you off, frustrating arguments with partners and children, deception or bullying by co-workers, or just

getting rudely shoved in a noisy, crowded bar; in short, the inevitable frustrations of life with other human beings. Some men and women do react with violence in these situations, but there are many more who wouldn't dream of it. Who, no matter how annoyed and angry and frustrated they are with another person would simply never strike them. And that's a virtue. It is a form of decency and a kind of self-control. My concern is that teaching people to overcome their inhibition to harm can undermine that.

Consider once again the sociopath, who feels no reluctance to harming in the first place. It is entirely possible for a sociopath of this kind to be a moral person. He may desire to be moral (because he is worried about hell, or maybe he simply wants to be a good person) and on those grounds he may refrain from harming others. But in frustrating situations it will be harder for him than it would be for a non-sociopath, because he lacks the visceral reaction to the distress of others that helps to motivate his restraint. Our barrier to harming others makes it easier for us not to harm them, and hence—most of the time—easier to do the right thing.

For the sociopath, refraining from harming may be more like refraining from eating junk food; it is something one knowns one ought to refrain from, and one wants to be able to refrain from it, but there are situations in which the abstract motivations are overwhelmed by our desire for heat, fat, sugar and convenience. Anyone fortunate enough to have a deep-seated, visceral barrier to eating junk food will find it easier to eat according to healthy principles. Similarly, the student who just can't imagine herself skipping class, who finds the very idea a bit shocking, finds it easier to resist the temptation to do so, even when she is overwhelmed by work and exhausted. So suppose someone has a barrier to harm. Won't they find it easier to refrain from harming others in everyday life, even in the heat of the moment when they are already irritated, and they've just been rudely shoved by an idiot in the bar? In such a situation it can be difficult to refrain from reacting—but it may well be much easier if you haven't been conditioned to get past your barrier to harm. Now if someone has a barrier to eating junk food, or against skipping class, it would be cruel to take it away; in the demanding and stressful ultra-marathons of civilian life, such things help us to make it through. They are instrumental in our getting college degrees and staying healthy. Most of martial arts students start out with a strong, almost emotional distaste for harming others. The challenge is this: how could it be ok to take that away?

## 7 Responses to the challenge

In the final part of this chapter I am going to consider three responses. The first two might sound like strawmen to someone who is unfamiliar with the culture of the martial arts, but I am including them because I have frequently heard them from martial artists. They are part of the intellectual background noise around the marital arts community. They are:

- that martial artists are good people who would never use their training for evil;
- that not everyone can be a martial artist—teachers should only teach a select band of suitable people, the *real* martial artists—and these people would never use their power for harm.

I'll argue that both these responses are wrong. Lastly I will consider a much less familiar response. The idea is that a certain group of people—namely women—might be trained to overcome barriers to harm without the same dangers.

## 8 'Martial artists are good people'

There are three versions of this view, since you might think that only good people can train in the martial arts (perhaps because instructors only accept good people) or that bad people don't even attempt to do martial arts (perhaps because the training is hard and they are lazy) or finally that training actually turns bad people into good ones. Here's a quote from the website of one well-known karate school that expresses all three:

> It is possible to say that in Shotokai, the teachers strive to avoid teaching people who have a violent tendency and training methods tend to root out people who are hiding their real intentions. ... [A]fter 5 or 10 years of traditional Karate-do training, you have the ability of maiming or even killing an individual with your bare hands or feet, but in those years of intensive training your mind has changed, you are disciplined, you have learnt about yourself and other people, the value of life, the beauty of life, you now control your impulses and have overcome your weaknesses, you have obtained a very strong disciplined mind. Even though you may have the power you do not use it, actually you shun violence and go to great lengths to avoid conflicts and dangerous situations that could expose your violence, you conceal your knowledge and never, never ever abuse your capabilities.
>
> *Shotokai 2006*

Similarly, US dojo that teach children are apt to advertise the moral virtues that they will inculcate, such as discipline and respect for elders. Now if any of these versions of the 'martial artists are good people' view were correct, we would expect to see a higher than average level of morality among martial artists.

Consider an alternative thesis for a moment: that training in a martial art encourages selfishness and self-absorption. Training takes time and money—time and money that could have been spent on or with your family, or others who need it—and if all goes well, what it returns is a fitter, stronger, more dominant *you*. Although many people like to indulge the fantasy that they will one day use their skills to protect others, in reality they could meet those goals

more efficiently by attending a good first-aid course and by carrying a cell-phone, and an aspirin in their wallets. Doing six hours of Aikido a week so that you can protect people is like going running every morning so that you can get places faster—there are smarter approaches. Not to mention that in place of doing six hours of Aikido a week for ten years you could get a nursing degree by going to college part time, or volunteer at a soup kitchen. Even in the civilian professions in which an ability to physically subdue someone else is important—such as certain mental health professions—the task is done better by a team of ordinary people who know how to work together than by a single star individual. But few mainstream martial arts teach one how to subdue someone as part of a group. Perhaps that is because what the martial artist really desires is personal admiration and glory. His goal takes discipline and hard work, but so does body-building, and no-one, I think, really believes that body-builders are more moral than the general population. Perhaps we should expect trained martial artists to be more selfish and *less* moral than the general population.

Now I don't claim that they are, but rather that this is every bit as plausible as the thesis that martial artists are better people than average, and in general not a shred of evidence is presented for the claims that martial artists are good people. However, this being the martial arts, there are plenty of anecdotes:

> The jujutsu dojo where I practiced was situated not far from Nedzu, and the pupils found these gamblers and other rough elements excellent raw material on which to test their skill. We were in the habit of repairing to the road I have described, usually choosing a dark night and there taking up our station in the bamboo bushes. When a party of gamblers came along one of our number would emerge from his hiding place and intercept their passage. A row was sure to ensue. We had no intention of inflicting serious bodily harm; all we wanted to do was give them a bit of a surprise and a certain amount of physical pain by way of well-deserved chastisement for their sins. Accordingly we agreed among ourselves not to strike at any vital spot, but to confine our attentions to dislocating temporarily the lower jaws of the bellicose gamblers. We have a simple method of accomplishing this by sharply striking the point with the open palm [...] it used to afford us jujutsu pupils intense amusement to watch our victims as, with their lower jaws out of joint, they would vainly try to cry out, the only audible outcome being a sort of muffled groan as with both hands supporting their damaged jaws they made off at full speed... Bone setting is taught by jujutsu masters as an essential part of the art, and so it happened that the injured gamblers would go to the dojo in the morning to have their jaws reset. Often as many as half a dozen victims would require the services of our teacher in a single day after a fracas of the kind I have described, and we would thus have the pleasure of examining at close quarters the effect of our skill, which added to the zest of these nocturnal adventures.
>
> *Harrison 1955, 67–68*

> In 1977 I was travelling through northern California and managed to get my finger broken in a freak accident at the Berkeley Aikikai. I went to the emergency room, explained how it happened, and the admitting nurse said 'Aikido... aikido. That's that really violent martial art, isn't it? Did some guy named Bruce Klickstein do it? We're always getting students in here with broken wrists and arms from that guy.'
>
> *Amdur 2000*

Amdur's article 'Toward Simple Morality—or how come something so fine turns so ugly?' contains a catalogue of dojo-based abuses in which teachers and senior students prey on junior students, women, children and visitors.

> I try to catch my opponent on the tip of his nose because I try to punch the bone into his brain.
>
> *Mike Tyson in Oates 1987, 12*

Mike Tyson is, I maintain, unequivocally one of the most talented fighters of all time. In the early parts of his career he exemplified discipline and excellence in his training and in his performance in the ring. But anyone who is familiar with Tyson's biography, and, I like to imagine, the older Tyson himself, knows that being a great martial artist and being a good person are simply different things. It is possible to be both, but the one does not entail the other.

## 9 'Not everyone can be a martial artist'

> Persuading yourself that you are the kind of person who can do a repugnant act is playing with fire... It can weaken barriers that ought to be left in place.
>
> *Adam Morton,* On Evil

A second kind of response is to say that the way the martial arts are actually practiced is indeed reprehensible. The problem is that teachers teach people they should not; training should be restricted to the 'real' martial artists. In the more lurid sources the word 'warrior' gets used. The suggestion is that only the warriors should be taught, and in this context that means taught to overcome barriers to harm. Then these people can do any harming necessary for greater good, etc. without endangering the moral virtue of the rest of us.

The suggestion nearly alway seems to be that the people who should be trained are the people who are capable of excelling at fighting and usually that is large, athletic men. The flaw with this response is that the very same extent that a good fighter is especially useful in a rare situation in which he is required to do harm for the greater good, he is especially dangerous in the more common situation in which he must resist an impulse to harm. Hence it is in fact for the strongest, most athletic fighters that the concern associated with undermining the barrier to harm is the *most* acute. Restricting training to them does not answer the challenge.

However, there are a couple of very non-standard versions of the 'not everyone can be a martial artist' response that have more promise. The first points out that there *is*, in fact, a class of person whose barriers to harm will not be undermined in the slightest by martial arts training: the sociopaths. That's because they didn't have any barriers to undermine. Hence, if you restrict your barrier-training to proven sociopaths, I concede, the argument of this article won't touch you. But I hazard that this is unlikely to be a satisfying response for many martial arts teachers.

The other non-standard version of the 'not everyone can be a martial artist' response suggests that we should only train the likely *victims* of violence, who are otherwise unlikely to be violent themselves. A plausible category would be women, though there might also be others. This is an interesting enough response that I'll treat it in a separate section.

## 10 Evening the playing field

One fictional case that Morton discusses is that of Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* (Burgess 2012/1962). Alex is a hyper-violent teen gang-member. He goes to prison and is then subjected to an experimental programme which conditions him *against* violence. He is shown videos of violence paired with negative stimuli (a drug which makes him violently ill) and, at least in Burgess' story, he has his barrier to violence restored; Alex can no longer even contemplate violence without becoming ill. But as Morton notes, this does not turn Alex into a normal person. Rather he is now absolutely unable to defend himself, however reasonable that would be. He is almost beaten to death by a librarian, as well as former friends and eventually attempts suicide.

This is not a real case, of course, but it does provide a compelling *illustration* of the idea that here might be an appropriate setting for resistance to violence in an environment. It's even possible that barriers to harm work a little like disgust; nearly everyone has the barrier but it will get set to different levels, depending on one's life experiences (and if this determination is more easily made in childhood, it might explain the ease of the violentisation process in early life, compared to the severe PTSD associated with the process when it is done to adults). When one reads the testimony of women who say they simply *couldn't* fight back, even if it meant being raped or killed, it is easy to see a similarity with Alex. So here is an interesting possibility: many women are already being conditioned, throughout their lives, but conditioned in the opposite direction; they are consistently rewarded (with attention and praise) for sweet, submissive behaviour and punished (with social sanctions and rejection) for assertive, aggressive or violent behaviour. Even play-fighting is regarded as unsuitable, and dominant or even assertive behaviour in the workplace meets social resistance (Fine 2011; Sandberg 2013, Chapter 3).[8]

In that case it is possible that many women now have the opposite problem from many veterans of war; whereas the veterans might find their post-war lives easier if their barrier to harm were set at a higher level, some women

might benefit from having it on a lower setting. This makes space for one kind of answer to the challenge of this chapter: perhaps you can make the case that *your* students are already the victims of social conditioning and as a result they currently have their barrier to harm set at too high a level. Hence you are not simply lowering it, but lowering to a better level for the environment. You are most likely to be able to make this case if you are teaching something like a rape prevention course. It is unlikely that the case would be plausible for a general dojo, with a mixed population.

This is an interesting idea, but let me note two reservations. The first is that, being a woman, I am myself a member of the group which this response would allow to train. I therefore have a stake in the game, and I can't help but be reminded of the self-serving arguments of large men who managed to convince themselves that only large men should receive certain kinds of training. One should always be especially cautious about proposals that work well for oneself. Given this, I think it is even more important that training decisions are driven by data, and not by any particular teacher's intuition or judgement.

My second reservation is that a lot more research would need to be done in this area before any such strategy should be pursued with confidence. We need consistent experimental techniques for measuring barriers to harm and they should be used to examine interpersonal variation, and intrapersonal variation *with different kinds of training* across diverse populations. We need to know about the life experiences of people with different settings on their barriers to harm in different environments. It would be beyond arrogant for a teacher to simply study one of their own students and assume they can determine that, and how, the student's psychology should be different. Without the control provided by such fine-grained data, attempting to manipulate your students' barriers to harm with exposure to disturbing situations is a bit like trying to fix your computer with a hammer; you probably will make a difference; but you're also likely to break something.

Perhaps military recruits have some sense of what they are offering to sacrifice when they sign up. Many presumably were aware that they might lose their lives, but it is unclear if they realised how profoundly they could be harmed by the loss of their mental and moral equilibria. When it comes to civilians training a few times a week, it is clear that respect for your students as people requires you not to indulge your desire to play a priori psychologist. Yes, there is evidence that most people need to overcome barriers to harming others to fight well. And there is indeed evidence that conditioning involving disturbing situations can help them overcome these barriers. My suggestion is that in considering whether and how to include such training techniques we need to think not just about the rare situations in which doing good involves harming others, but also the much more common situation in which avoiding doing evil is made more difficult by the absence of a barrier to harm.

## Notes

1 Research on disgust has shown that humans are 'set up' to find a food disgusting if they become sick after eating it, but that *which* foods we find disgusting varies with personal history (Rozin et al. 2008).
2 Is there a similar barrier to self-harm? Perhaps, but it isn't as relevant for the martial arts.
3 People with no barrier to harm are sometimes referred to as 'sociopaths' or 'psychopaths' though here I do not intend these terms to have any negative connotations.
4 Not all martial arts sports fit that model. Common Judo injuries like broken fingers, MCL tears, etc. are side-effects of playing rather than things that will score you points; you don't win a Judo match by breaking your opponent's fingers and the way you do win—by throw, choke or armbar—needn't injure a well-trained competitor. Judo and wrestling are quite hard on competitors physically, but probably less hard than American football. BJJ is similar. With Karate and TKD it depends on the rules and how well they are enforced (Canney 1991, 105).
5 Kate Sekules' book *The Boxer's Heart* describes the effect of failing to overcome that barrier on her boxing carrier (Sekules 2002).
6 It is these intermittent features of the reality-based movement that prompted the website Bullshido's quip that 'suburban white paranoia is not a martial art'.
7 Grossman also lists dehumanising the target through the use of stereotypes and slurs as a technique that various militaries have used to overcome the barrier to harm (Grossman 1995, Chapter 3).
8 It is possible that a woman might decide to be a passivist on principled grounds and decide to submit to her attacker as a result of those theoretical convictions, rather than because she simply can't bring herself to fight back. If so she might not want her barrier to harm overcome. But I think it likely that many cases are not like this.

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# 3

# MARTIAL ARTS AND MORAL LIFE

*Sylvia Burrow*

A row of uniformed British police officers cower before a solitary 'Ju-Jutsu Suffragette' in a July 1910 cartoon from *Punch* magazine. She is depicted as having tossed to the side her gloves, hat, and her placard, on it emblazoned 'Votes for Women.' The caption reads, 'What we may expect when our women all become Ju-Jutsu Suffragettes.'

**FIGURE 3.1** Ju-Jutsu Suffragette (used with permission by Punch Ltd)

What caused such a stir? Earlier in the month, photographs of 'Mrs Garrud, a well-known Suffragette' appeared in the London *Sketch* in which she is throwing, ju-jitsu style, a uniformed British police officer to the ground (Svinth 2001). Garrud's power created a mockery, not only of her power to demand the right to vote but also of her power to physically defend herself. The feminist point is that Garrud's case is not surprising. Undermining women's power is a pervasive and integral part of current social and political structures, which are mainly aligned to accord power to men (Bartky 2004; Bartky 1990; Held 2006; Aguilar and Nightingale 1994). If power is a capacity or ability to transform oneself or others then undermining women's power threatens that capacity of self-transformation (Burrow 2012).

My purpose in this chapter is to point to autonomy and integrity as key sources of transformation. Each is essential to moral life. Moral persons are autonomous, at least to some degree, since persons are held morally responsible only for those actions originating from their own choices. Autonomy expresses self-governance and thus relies on the capacity to form and act on choices. Integrity is a matter of standing for those beliefs, judgements, values, or principles that are important to who one is (Calhoun 1995). This view of integrity as *standing for something before others* has gained considerable currency in moral theory because it captures a common element present to theories of integrity as: (i) self-integration; (ii) fidelity to what is necessary to one's identity; and (iii) setting limits to what one will not do. Autonomy and integrity are each self-protective. Integrity protects the self's commitments through demonstrating to others that one's commitments matter to who one is, so one is not willing to compromise those commitments. Autonomy is self-protective because withstanding pressures against counterforces protects our ability to form and act on choices—this is why autonomy is undermined through force, threats, manipulation or coercion. The ability to protect our commitments is relevant to the capacity of self-transformation. Without autonomy we lack the ability to govern and guide our lives in directions we choose. And without integrity we miss having a self to transform in any coherent or consistent way (even supposing that the self is not entirely consistent or unified in its beliefs). Hence, both autonomy and integrity are significant sources of our power to live our lives as moral beings.

A key point of feminist moral philosophy is that social and political conditions continue to work against women's ability to flourish as moral agents. By pointing to how autonomy and integrity are threatened for women I aim to uncover a significant means through which women's power is undermined in society. My focus is on violence against women as a pervasive, inescapable social condition that threatens both integrity and autonomy. Concern for personal safety routinely constrains woman's power to have and act on choices while undermining the ability to stand for judgements before others. Socialisation in public vigilance further entrenches women's fear of violence and hence, restricts women's possibility to flourish as moral agents. I suggest that training in martial arts counters fears for personal safety through

cultivating confidence in skills of self-protection. I understand martial arts training as training in self-defence and so my account also speaks to training provided through self-defence classes. Martial arts training aims at the cultivation of specific skills of self-defence through embarking on a long-term programme of skill acquisition taught by instructors who have demonstrated their skill and superiority according to the style's accepted traditions. In contrast, self-defence classes aim at short-term acquisition (usually in less than 20 weeks) of a limited number of self-defence applications aiming to control, defuse, or leave a threatening situation. Feminist self-defence classes include the latter but situate learning physical skills within a curriculum attending to women's threat of sexual violence and includes attention to verbal assertiveness in response to threats of violence (Hollander 2010). Self-confidence is, in my opinion, integral to acquiring and advancing skills of self-defence in any of the above forms. My thesis is that self-confidence is important to self-protection and so it is significant to both autonomy and integrity. Thus, self-defence is a significant source of women's power to live as moral persons within a culture of violence against women.

## 1 A culture of violence against women

Amnesty International (2006) has accrued data from over 50 independent world surveys on violence against women (VAW) that indicate one in three women worldwide will experience personal violence in her lifetime. Both the experience and the threat of violence create what I call a *culture of violence against women*. A culture of VAW is a culture in which women are commonly assaulted and so it is a culture in which women fear or are otherwise worried about threats of violence. I argue below that fear of violence is deeply engrained in women and that it threatens women's autonomy and integrity.

A culture of VAW is composed of both the experience and threat of harm. Women's *experience* of violence is typically physical and sexual assault. The experience of violence is often followed by the psychological harm of 'post traumatic stress disorder' (PTSD). PTSD includes feelings of disassociation, nightmares, intrusive memories, excessive startle responses, and agitation (see Brecklin 2004). PTSD interferes with women's ability to live normal lives, particularly if it is severe, as it often is after rape (Brison 1999; Brison 1997). I suggest that the *threat* of harm most matters to women's ability to develop integrity and autonomy. Threat of violence is routinely part of women's lives. Women most fear sexual assault and this fear is targeted towards strangers; physical assault is not feared in itself but because it might occur during sexual assault (Cobbina et al. 2008). Research on fear of stranger violence shows that, even factoring for differences such as race, economic status, social status, or age, *gender* is the most stable predictor of a person's fear of violence (May et al. 2010).

Women's fear of stranger violence is a common part of life that is closely associated with restrictive behaviours. Women routinely take evasive actions such as carrying pepper spray or keys in their hands, avoiding certain parking

lots or streets, not walking alone, and so forth. Such precautions reflect a deep concern for women's safety and security in public, which is so familiar as to appear self-evident. Socialisation of girls and women encourages the need to be vigilant of stranger assaults. Popular belief supposes that assaults against women are most likely to occur by strangers in parks or streets, whether day or night. Media reports of sexual assaults feed this popular view through publicising accounts of strangers leaping out of bushes to assault lone female walkers or joggers (Pain 1997). Police literature and government campaigns focus on personal prevention strategies to avoid stranger assault (Stanko 1995). Prevention strategies focus on stranger violence and women's responsibility to avoid assault, identifying potential sources of danger and effective resistance techniques (Orchowski et al. 2008). Not only is a focus on women's responsibility not effectively targeted, it is objectionable because it supposes that women are in charge of avoiding attacks. Responsibility needs to be placed on perpetrators. Perpetrators of VAW are accountable for assaulting women, period. My emphasis on cultivating skills of self-defence should not be taken to suggest that women are responsible for VAW or responsible to avoid VAW. Rather, my point is to show that women fear violence and are socialised to act on this fear through restrictive behaviours that result from a focus on women's responsiveness to the threat of violence.

Now, one might point out that women's fear of violence appears to be misplaced because it is targeted towards stranger violence. Far more women experience violence at the hands of *intimates* than strangers. Women are typically threatened, intimidated, and so forth by people they know prior to their physical or sexual assaults (Stevens 1996, Downs et al. 2007). International evidence reveals that, while the rates of this violence change, the threats from intimates remain. The World Health Organization's (2005) study across ten countries shows that, for example, 15 per cent of women in Japan and 71 per cent of women in Ethiopia reported physical or sexual violence by a husband or partner. According to one estimate, domestic violence affects more than 32 million women (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000). Heterosexual women are most vulnerable since violence by male partners is the most common form of violence against women (Robinson 2003). Psychological research shows that personal assaults are usually preceded by verbal and emotional assaults, or what is called psychological abuse. Psychological abuse commonly includes belittling, mocking, insulting, manipulating, threatening, yelling, withholding access (to money, car keys, house keys, and so forth), and being forced to witness physical violence (slamming, hitting, destroying objects or animals). Women subject to psychological harms often feel threatened by the possibility of physical or sexual assault and this perception seems accurate. Psychological abuse usually precedes physical or sexual assault (Penn and Nardos 2003). So if women are worried about violence, it would seem that the scrutiny should be of intimate partners and not where one walks at night. Yet the focus on heterosexual women's partners is interestingly obscured by a quiet yet relentless orientation towards women's own actions to prevent stranger violence.

Fear of stranger violence is not due to some error in belief women somehow possess *en masse*. I doubt fear of stranger violence is due to some strange error of belief presiding over women even while we are well-informed of the widespread prevalence of acquaintance and partner violence (at least in most Western countries). Feminist inspired media campaigns, feature articles, and documentaries since the 1980s have brought considerable attention to domestic assault and brought important legal changes, such as making date rape a crime. Stranger violence is more frightening to women because it seems both unpredictable and unavoidable; and women generally feel confident in their abilities to predict and avoid intimate violence (Pain 1997). While stranger assault is less predictable, this does not sufficiently explain why women predominantly fear it. One suggestion Pain notes is that socialisation in fear of stranger violence is encouraged to draw attention away from acquaintance assault and to incite women to seek safety at home as part of 'keeping women in their place.' (Pain 1997, 299) More recent research suggests that fear of stranger assault is linked to women's more general fear of victimisation. Women are typically aware that VAW is a widespread issue but are socialised to associate VAW with strangers in public. As we saw above, media reports and both government and police literature focus on stranger violence. Women are *socialised* to avoid harm by monitoring choices and actions to minimise risk-taking and avoid risk of danger in public (May et al. 2010). Socialisation in fear of stranger violence appears to best explain why women fear stranger violence far more than acquaintance violence. Below, I expand on how socialisation in fear of stranger violence is a serious concern for women's ability to flourish as moral persons.

## 2 Autonomy and integrity

In a culture of violence, intimidating or threatening postures, words, or actions are threats to women's safety. Typical responses to the threat of violence emphasize women's vulnerability and so do little to counter fear of violence. The upshot is that women adopt constraints on behaviour that undermine both autonomy and integrity. Constrained action takes the form of either *avoidance* or *defensive* behaviours (May et al. 2010). Common avoidance behaviours are avoiding certain places, not going out at night, not walking or taking the bus alone, and choosing against certain events or activities. Defensive actions include carrying pepper spray or mace, owning a gun, having a burglar alarm or watchdog, holding keys in hands when walking, and so forth. Both avoidance and defensive actions constrain action because they introduce limits on what one can do, whether it is not going to certain places or not going alone. Many restrictive behaviours are quite routine and so ingrained as habits that women tend not to notice them as restrictions. Nevertheless, these restrictions are in place because women fear violence when alone in public. Note that what women find as sexually violating or threatening need not fit criminal statutes. The reality of sexual violence is brought home to

women through everyday, mundane situations (Stanko 1995). Stanko points out that fear of physical and sexual assault is fuelled by everyday forms of sexual harassment such as catcalls, comments by male passerby, being followed or felt up on public transport, or receiving obscene phone calls. Experiencing threat of VAW on a routine, everyday basis emphasizes women's vulnerability to violence. We see this vulnerability enforced in the United States by marketing of products such as the Shrill Alarm, a personal handheld alarm; Cellnet, a cell phone company advertising through depicting a lone stranded woman; the US National Rifle Association's $2 million campaign reminding women to buy guns to address fear of crime; panic pendants, and other products designed to respond to women's fear of sexual assault (Stanko 1995). The advertisers of these products all appeal to women's vulnerability to assault. The obvious message is that women need to buy these products and try to avoid violence as best as possible. The less obvious message is that buying these products should be accompanied by a prudent exercise of caution and avoidance exemplified in the sorts of defensive and avoidance behaviours we saw above. Constraining behaviour is expected but it is, in the end, simply a passive response that fails to lessen women's fear of violence while emphasizing public vigilance. In what follows I plan to draw out the point that constrained behaviour undermines women's power of self-transformation through limiting possibilities of both autonomy and integrity.

I have argued elsewhere through pointing to socialisation in femininity that constraining behaviour limits autonomy (Burrow 2009). Rather than summarise my earlier points I wish to extend my argument here through pointing to *limited live options* as limits to autonomy. Options that are not practically pursuable are not live options. A woman's option to wear whatever she likes and to go wherever she wants at night are not live options for most women because of fear of VAW. We say persons lack autonomy if choices are the result of threats, coercion, force, or manipulation because each interferes with persons' capacity for choice formation and pursuit. The 'option' to constrain behaviour is forced in the sense that women have little practicable means of escaping fear of stranger violence due to feminine socialisation, as I have earlier argued. If this is correct then women simply lack any live option to avoid constraining behaviours and in this way, autonomy is limited. I do not suppose that autonomy is limited because choices are limited (for instance, where to go in public, or with whom, or when). My view is that autonomy is also limited in a more global way since the fabric of women's daily lives is informed by a subtle but insistent limit on choices interwoven throughout the most pedestrian decisions (what clothes to wear, what shoes to put on, where to keep one's mobile phone, and so forth). Both obvious and not so obvious restrictions in choices are informed by safety concerns of going about one's business in public. For women, going out in public is inextricably tied to a concern for one's vulnerability to assault and a corresponding restriction of choice formation and pursuit. That is, women do not have the option of making choices *without* concern for personal safety and well-being. Since these concerns simply

eliminate certain choices from the realm of what is practically pursuable, fear of violence undermines autonomy.

We see a similar impact in the case of integrity. I suggest that VAW restricts practical possibilities for integrity through limiting those commitments women are willing to take on or how and when women are willing to act on those commitments. Integrity is threatened by two sorts of pressures in virtue of living in a culture of violence, internal and external pressures. Internal pressures may wreck integrity through self-criticism, self-denial, or other internal turmoil that brings persons to violate their own views. External threats usually take the form of others' reproaches, criticisms, wheedling, or persuasion, all of which press us to cave in on those values, beliefs, or judgements that are important to the self. Internal and external pressures can work separately or together to compromise aims, goals, or projects because of fear of violence. If we change how we dress, who we walk with, where we choose to go, and so forth out of threat of violence then those choices can impact what commitments to stand for (or not). Let's say I am committed to jogging as part of my view of myself as both an athletic person and a person with discipline. Exercise is not simply something I do when the impulse strikes me, it is something to which I am committed. Even though I have this commitment, I still might consider it unwise to jog when travelling in a new city if I am unsure which places or times of day would make me more vulnerable to assault. Or perhaps I have just moved neighbourhood. Or simply varied the time of day in which I go out to exercise. If in any of these cases I do not see going out to exercise as a wise choice because of threat of violence—even if I do not consciously think to myself 'I might be assaulted'—then I have not stood by my commitment to exercise. I have, in fact, weakened my commitment. In cases like these, the external threat of violence impairs my capacity to uphold my commitment and hence, erodes integrity.

Internal pressures working against the capacity to stand for something before others are less obvious but no less worrying. I argue elsewhere (Burrow 2012) that self-confidence is necessary to integrity because without it, we cannot stand for our commitments. Doubting oneself by doubting one's choices erodes the fortitude necessary to withstanding pressures working against integrity. Threat of violence is often, although not always, linked to fear or intimidation. Fear and intimidation undermine self-confidence through doubting one's choice of action. Doubting whether one is making the best choices to protect one's safety undermines self-confidence. Now threat of violence is less likely to erode self-confidence than the actual experience of violence. We see this most obviously in the case of intimate partner assault. When people wonder 'How can she stay with him while he continually assaults her?' they need not shake their heads in disbelief. It is all too believable that a lack of self-esteem undermines one's ability to defend oneself against personal attacks; or brings a person to believe 'I must be *the cause* of his violent outburst.' The latter is usually part of the manipulation and threats implicit to domestic violence, since attackers often blame victims for their own angry outbursts or

assaults. Victims often come to believe that they are the source of the violence because they did the wrong thing, said the wrong thing, or otherwise acted to provoke the attack. Social workers commonly recognise this blaming as part of the tension evident in a *cycle of violence* that evidences how psychological abuse is tightly connected to physical assault.

Psychologists recognise that psychological abuse erodes self-esteem, undermining women's capacity to consider themselves valuable or worthwhile (Bartky 2004; Penn and Nardos 2003). Thus intimate partners who keep women in a cycle of violence perpetuate their loss of self-esteem. In this environment, it is no wonder women lack the confidence to stand for their commitments. Not even the commitment to one's own well-being is immune since women in abusive relationships predominantly focus on their partner's needs and wishes at the expense of their own (Lynch and Graham-Berman 2000).

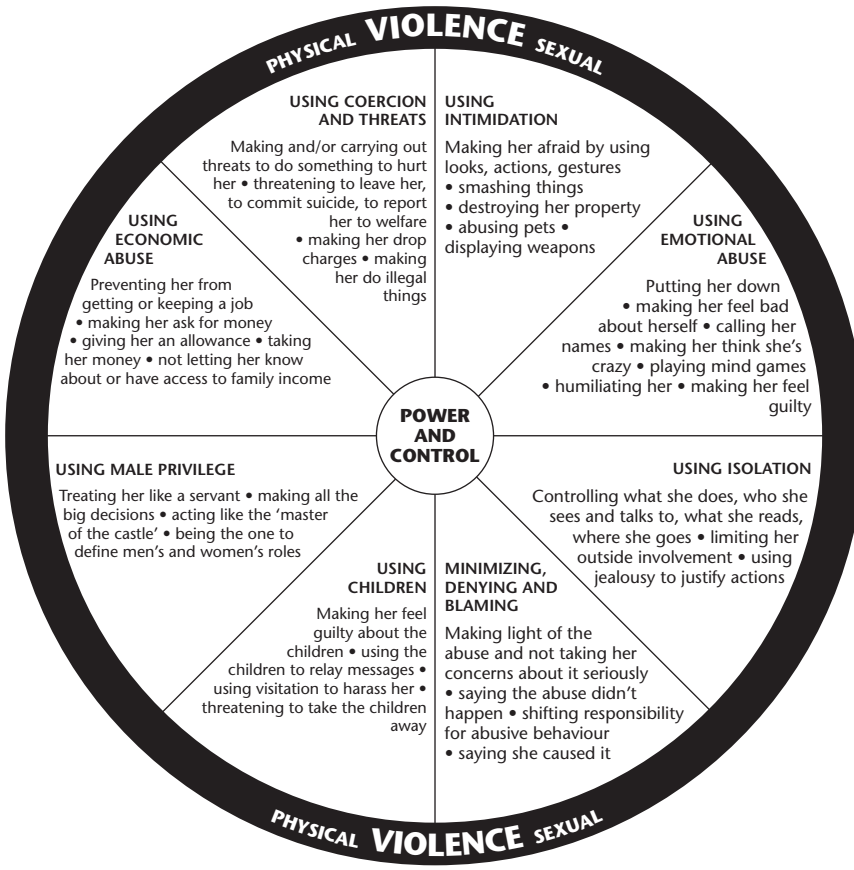
PHYSICAL VIOLENCE SEXUAL
USING COERCION AND THREATS
Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her • threatening to leave her, to commit suicide, to report her to welfare • making her drop charges • making her do illegal things
USING INTIMIDATION
Making her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures • smashing things • destroying her property • abusing pets • displaying weapons
USING ECONOMIC ABUSE
Preventing her from getting or keeping a job • making her ask for money • giving her an allowance • taking her money • not letting her know about or have access to family income
USING EMOTIONAL ABUSE
Putting her down • making her feel bad about herself • calling her names • making her think she's crazy • playing mind games • humiliating her • making her feel guilty
POWER AND CONTROL
USING MALE PRIVILEGE
Treating her like a servant • making all the big decisions • acting like the 'master of the castle' • being the one to define men's and women's roles
USING ISOLATION
Controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads, where she goes • limiting her outside involvement • using jealousy to justify actions
USING CHILDREN
Making her feel guilty about the children • using the children to relay messages • using visitation to harass her • threatening to take the children away
MINIMIZING, DENYING AND BLAMING
Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously • saying the abuse didn't happen • shifting responsibility for abusive behaviour • saying she caused it
PHYSICAL VIOLENCE SEXUAL

**FIGURE 3.2** Wheel of Violence (used with permission of the Dultuh Domestic Abuse Intervention Project)

Loss of self-confidence is not limited to the experience of violence. Sutton, Robinson, and Farrall (2011) point to empirical research linking restrictive avoidance and defensive behaviours to negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, frustration, and sadness. The authors confirm earlier studies in rape literature showing that women exposed to a description of rape experience lower self-esteem than a control group. Their study shows that women's self-esteem is eroded by the societal view that women ought to be protected by men, a view that is shared by men and women alike. This view exemplifies benevolent sexism since it is a positive expression of concern for women's well-being but embeds a sexist assumption that women are unable to protect their own well-being. Endorsing this benevolently sexist view entrenches social norms casting women as weak, helpless, vulnerable to assault and thus dependent on men for protection. The cost to self-esteem is a function of women's perceived loss of control. Hence, the authors conclude that threat of violence heightens women's sense of vulnerability and decreases the sense of self-efficacy, each of which lower self-esteem.

Undermined self-esteem because of fear of violence affects self-confidence. Fearing violence in a culture that presses women to accept responsibility to avoid violence burdens women with choosing the best or most appropriate restrictive actions for any given situation. When the onus to avoid violence lies with women and women's vulnerability to violence is weighted heavily, women may easily doubt their choices. Did she make the right choice in going to an event with a woman friend instead of a male friend? Will she be vulnerable to assault if she chooses to walk down this street as opposed to that street? Did she say the 'wrong thing' to her partner this morning? Self-doubt creeps in when choices are made in a threatening environment because the costs are high. When that environment has already proven harmful, as is the case with intimate partner violence, confidence in one's ability to stand for one's commitments is derailed by lowered self-esteem. Hence, whether women are in public or private environments (not that the division between the two is necessarily sharp) women can suffer threats to self-confidence. Integrity is eroded by lack of self-confidence when it undercuts one's ability to stand for one's commitments before others. And if we consider that we have no commitments to stand for without autonomy, then we can appreciate that undermining integrity affects autonomy. That is, the capacity to choose and act is undermined if we lack confidence in our decisional capacity.

## 3 Martial arts training

The view I develop below is that martial arts training counters fear of violence through instilling self-confidence and hence, expands women's possibilities for autonomy and integrity. Self-confidence is integral to maintaining and exercising the ability to form and act on our choices, and to stand for those commitments that matter to us. Because it develops women's ability to resist assault, self-defence training responds to harms to self-esteem incurred in a

culture of violence. This is not to say that self-defence training provides an invincible shield against the harms of VAW. In particular, assault by intimates opens a complex set of vulnerabilities and worries for women because domestic violence is typically tied to psychological abuse. As we saw above, psychological abuse harms self-confidence through belittling, insulting, coercing, manipulating, and so forth. Martial arts training may seem to do little to protect the self against such harms because its emphasis is on learning physical skills, not psychological skills. But I suspect that martial arts training places women in a better position than we would otherwise be. Let me expand.

Empirical research shows a connection between improved self-confidence and martial arts training. Much of this research focuses on self-defence training, but we can understand it to extend to martial arts training since self-defence training is a central component of martial arts training. Admittedly, different styles of martial arts may emphasize specific techniques of self-defence to greater or lesser degree and may 'hide' or embed self-defence techniques within traditional patterns or sequences of movements. But these points do not detract from the claim that martial arts training necessarily includes training in self-defence. While I acknowledge that self-defence classes differ in their duration and intensity than traditional martial arts training, if taking a 12 or 20 week self-defence class can produce measurable results in self-confidence then we can expect that longer durations of time will improve or at least maintain those levels of confidence. Since traditional martial arts training usually consists of more than the standard duration of a self-defence class I expect martial arts training will improve or maintain self-confidence levels.

Martial arts training produces *skill self-confidence* (confidence in one's skills of self-defence) and this self-confidence appears to be connected to an increase in *overall self-confidence*. Skill self-confidence is measured in one's confidence to execute specific techniques with correct timing and distance to evade, subdue, or counter-strike an opponent. Numerous empirical studies show that self-confidence in self-defence skills is increased after 10 week, 12 week, and 20 week programmes (Ball and Martin 2012; Hollander 2004; Hollander 2010; Brecklin 2011). This effect is not lost quickly. Ball and Martin (2012) note that tests measuring improved skill self-confidence show that even after training ceases, skill self-confidence remains at comparable levels *six months later.* Less data is available on traditional martial arts training. Angleman et al. (2009) consider a popular view in the media that, unlike self-defence classes, martial arts training does not provide women with adequate skills needed for self-defence. The authors point out that the popular view is evident in recent research that excludes traditional martial arts as a source of skill self-confidence and focuses on self-defence classes instead (Angleman et al. 2009, 90). Angleman et al. failed to find any actual comparison studies between martial arts training and self-defence classes concerning skill self-confidence. The authors' research suggests that martial arts training develops automaticity and proficiency in execution of skills *better* than self-defence classes and thus better cultivates confidence in response to one's ability to respond to threats

before they become fully-fledged attacks. While the authors admit we need more research on the connection between learning martial arts and skill self-confidence, gaining an understanding will likely be complicated by differences between martial art styles and the kinds of skills each cultivates.

Self-confidence is far better documented in research focusing on overall self-confidence. Overall psychological health is typically measured by psychologists in terms of global self-esteem, which relies on feelings of self-worth and self-respect. Global self-esteem is closely correlated with a general attitude of self-confidence since the latter relies on positive beliefs about one's worth, self-efficacy, good qualities, and so forth (Owens 1993). Psychological studies show that self-defence training increases overall self-confidence in conjunction with assertiveness, self-esteem, and perceived control, whilst it decreases anxiety, depression, hostility, fear, and avoidance behaviours (Layton 1993; Angleman et al. 2009; Hollander 2004). Ball and Martin (2012) argue that it is likely that self-defence training programmes for women produce higher overall confidence because these classes are oriented towards enabling women to overcome psychological barriers to acting assertively. Women may be reluctant to implement risk reduction strategies while on a date because cultural dating norms encourage women to focus on relational cues rather than safety cues. Such norms discourage acting assertively, associating assertion with negative responses such as rejection and embarrassment. The authors' study shows that participants were more likely than the control group to be more assertive and to engage in far more self-protective behaviours. These results support previous research findings showing that self-defence classes instructing women how to overcome psychological social barriers encourage assertive resistance and thus improve overall self-confidence.

Improvements in overall self-confidence extend across self-defence classes to more traditional forms of martial arts. A variety of studies since the early 1990s have since shown a positive correlation between martial arts training and improved psychological health and personal development (Theeboom et al. 2009). This psychological research is a positive indicator of improved overall self-confidence through martial arts training. More recent studies examining specific styles of martial arts confirm this view. Improved overall self-confidence has been established in Kuan and Roy's (2007) study of Wushu athletes, Steyn and Roux's (2009) research on Tae Kwon Do students and Richman and Rehberg's (1986) comparison of self-esteem in senior Karate students compared to beginners. We should be cautious and not generalise from such studies to assert that all martial arts improve self-confidence or equally well. Vertonghen and Theeboom's (2010) review of the literature on martial arts' socio-psychological outcomes shows that positive psychological effects are associated with years of training. The authors nevertheless caution that psychological studies need to consider whether these positive effects are produced equally well through: (i) more traditional forms of martial arts (focusing on meditative aspects, self-control, respect, conflict avoidance) in comparison to sport training (focusing on competitive aspects); (ii) different

approaches to teaching in different styles; and (iii) personality traits of training participants. Kavoura et al. (2012) further add that Vertonghen and Theeboom's review of psychological research in martial arts fails to consider the impact of gender. Ignoring gender difference is troubling since most empirical research concerning martial arts training is gender-biased, considering male athletes the norm.

My main aim in what remains is to show that self-confidence produced through martial arts training is significant to autonomy and integrity for women, who live within a culture of violence. I do not deny that other sources of self-confidence contribute to choosing and standing for one's judgements. It is possible to develop strong self-confidence through sport or dance, particularly for girls and women (Young 2005; Meyers 2004; Magyar and Feltz 2003). But other forms of sport or dance need not generate self-defence skills since these athletic endeavours do not aim to train in self-defence. So even if these other forms of athleticism lead to improved overall self-confidence, that improvement need not be linked to improved confidence in one's skills of self-defence. My claim is that *because it trains in self-defence*, martial arts training develops self-confidence and this improves women's possibilities for autonomy and integrity. Self-confidence here includes both skill self-confidence and overall self-confidence as two related forms. Weitlauf et al. (2000) cite a significant amount of data that correlates perceptions of skill self-confidence with overall self-confidence. Those holding robust confidence in their skills are more likely to attempt difficult tasks, persist in overcoming obstacles, and are less likely to experience anxiety in the face of threats. The authors' study compared participants' skills self-confidence with overall self-confidence before and after self-defence training focusing on women's verbal, emotional, and physical resistance to threats. Their conclusions show that overall self-confidence increases with improved skill self-confidence and that both are maintained after a six month follow-up. If the authors' study is any indication, martial arts training develops both kinds of self-confidence through a focus on self-defence.

As an important disclaimer, we should note that self-confidence does not suggest rash, foolish, or aggressive displays of one's ability to defend the self. Self-confidence is not aggression, arrogance, or foolishness. The latter are *excesses* of confidence failing to take one's own vulnerability into account. Excesses of self-confidence undermine one's ability to protect oneself through encouraging rash or overly-risky behaviour. And lacking self-confidence in one's ability to protect oneself undermines the ability to do so, since self-doubt produces hesitation or lack of follow-through that leaves one open to attacks and counter-attacks. An effective amount of self-confidence lies between excesses of self-doubt and arrogance. This is an Aristotelian way of capturing the kind of skill self-confidence that arrives from self-defence training. Aristotle held that an appropriate amount of a disposition such as courage lies between an excess of rashness on the one end and an excess of fear on the other. While Aristotle employed such scales to call such dispositions *virtuous*, I

do not mean to imply that self-confidence is a virtue but that self-confidence is a mean between two extremes characterised by self-doubt and arrogance. My account is not normative because I neither hold that women ought to undertake self-defence training as a moral requirement; nor that self-defence training is necessary to integrity or autonomy.

## 4 Improving integrity and autonomy

In this section I point to martial arts training as a source of developing integrity and autonomy. I plan to draw out how self-confidence relates to the self-protective nature of both autonomy and integrity. We saw above that autonomy is a matter of self-determination that relies on the capacity to form and act on judgements without undue pressure, coercion, or force. Resisting counter-pressure against one's capacity for self-determination is to be true to oneself. Autonomy is, in an important sense, the capacity to decide to do what is good for oneself and so to carve out a space for oneself in the moral community, even if that requires resisting counter-pressures. In this sense autonomy is similar to integrity because integrity requires resistance to counter-pressures—indeed, it is best revealed in those situations testing one's commitments to one's values, beliefs, or principles. Carolyn McLeod (2005) points out that integrity and autonomy are each *self-protective*. Both autonomy and integrity require protecting the self against pressures that interfere with our ability to flourish and thus to express our standing as the individuals we are in our moral community. I am extending this account by adding that self-confidence is significant to the ability to be self-protective. We saw above that cultivating skills of self-defence generates both skill self-confidence and overall self-confidence. I suggest that such self-confidence is relevant to one's ability to protect the self from undue pressures working against autonomy and integrity.

Autonomy is promoted through martial art training because it produces self-confidence. Self-confidence allows persons to maintain autonomy in precisely those situations in which others interfere with our ability to make and act on our choices. We cannot act autonomously if others force us to choose according to *their* agendas because they threaten, coerce, or physically force us to carry out actions they decide are good to do. Most obviously, self-defence training enables us to resist if someone wants to harm us or force us to harm others. Notice I am not claiming that martial arts training is an invincible shield and so we can always resist others' attempts to thwart our autonomy. If someone points a gun at me and asks for my wallet I will probably hand over my wallet. It is not worth risking my life for the contents of my wallet. But training in martial arts prepares us in many ways to resist others' demands. We saw above that women who have confidence in their skills of self-defence have confidence in other areas of life. A woman who has skill self-confidence can resist those who evidence aggressive behaviour or postures by speaking calmly to defuse the situation, knowing that if the aggressor turns physical she will be able to act to stop that action. Martial arts training is inherently self-protective.

It provides a source of resisting others' attempts to influence our choices or actions due to threat of harm and so fosters confidence that one can maintain one's position without intimidation or fear. Less obviously, protecting our choices can simply be a matter of resisting others' attempts to thwart us from forming or carrying out our choices. If threats of violence can limit autonomy, then it seems that increasing self-confidence through martial arts training is a fitting means to reclaiming our possibilities for autonomy. And since martial arts training allows persons to choose among several possible courses of action in response to threats, coercion, or force, it provides more options for action and thus improves autonomy.

Self-confidence is important to integrity and when it results from martial arts training provides a key source of resistance against pressures others can place on our integrity. Possessing self-confidence to stand against physical or sexual harms, if it is to be well-placed, requires both having and recognising that one has the sort of physical and psychological skills enabling one to prevent harm to oneself. These skills foster a resilience to protect one's commitments *despite* the possibility of harm. Experiencing another's anger or agitation may be enough to silence those who fear further repercussion, especially those who have already experienced psychological harm (such as bullying or insults), physical assault, or sexual assault. The ability to remain strong in the face of adversity and to calmly maintain one's position is a result of confidence in oneself to respond well to such challenges. Those who undertake martial arts training develop their abilities, physical and psychological, to reject certain expectations as inappropriate because they are prepared to defend themselves if that rejection prompts intimidating words or gestures. This resiliency matters to one's capacity to maintain or develop integrity just as it does autonomy. Intimidation need not *directly* threaten violence to have an impact on women's integrity or autonomy. We saw earlier that women are socialised to fear violence and so even when others have no intention of physical or sexual harm women may feel threatened in ways that lead to restrictions in choice. Women who have already experienced violence are more vulnerable to intimidation from others' demands or reproaches. Since one in three women worldwide will experience some form of violence, we can expect an astonishingly large number of women will face some degree of intimidation or fear. Resiliency to intimidation and other responses to threat of violence is essential if autonomy and integrity are to flourish. My claim is that cultivating self-confidence through martial arts training is an important means of developing such resiliency.

The ability to remain strong in the face of adversity and to calmly maintain one's position is a result of confidence in oneself to respond well to such challenges. I suggest that this is the case not just for women who fear stranger violence but also for women who fear intimate partner assault. In response to the threat of stranger violence, women are encouraged to internalise social stigmas of weakness and vulnerability and are concomitantly discouraged from bold and assertive behaviour (Sutton et al. 2011). Martial arts training

overcomes such socialisation through encouraging assertive responses to threat of harm appropriate to the level of threat presented. Women who undertake martial arts training develop their abilities, physical and psychological, to publicly reject certain expectations as inappropriate because they are prepared to defend themselves even if that rejection prompts retaliatory attempts of physical or sexual assault. Possessing such resiliency results from self-confidence in one's ability to protect oneself. Notice that self-protection here is much more focused on actual threats of stranger violence and does not rely on the sorts of passive avoidance or defensive behaviours that women are commonly socialised to adopt.

Improved self-confidence is also a significant source of the ability to resist pressures associated with intimate partner violence. Self-confidence suffers for women caught in a pattern of domestic violence. Psychological abuse undermines self-esteem and contributes to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness (Aguilar and Nightingale 1994). Persons tend to become passive and accepting of violence and this lack of resistance is further associated with helplessness, depression, and low self-esteem (Penn and Nardos 2003, 148–150). Self-efficacy is a key component of self-confidence, so we can expect general feelings of hopelessness and helplessness to erode overall self-confidence. Lacking self-confidence to address psychological abuse opens women to physical and sexual assault since psychological abuse typically precedes physical or sexual assault. I suggest that possessing confidence to resist physical and sexual assault provides an opportunity for women to resist psychological abuse instead of avoiding resistance due to a fear of physical or sexual assault. Women facing psychological abuse but who are confident of resisting physical or sexual assaults as retribution for resisting psychological abuse can be more confident in their ability to resist psychological abuse. Thus, women who possess self-confidence in virtue of martial arts training are further enabled to resist intimate partner violence.

## 5 Conclusion

I have shown that autonomy and integrity are centrally a matter of protecting the self and that martial arts training enhances confidence in one's ability to protect oneself; hence, martial arts training is a source of improved possibility for autonomy and integrity. Since both autonomy and integrity are central components of moral life, martial arts training expands women's ability to live their lives as moral persons. History is shaped by persons standing for their commitments, those who display autonomy and integrity despite threatening circumstances. Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, and more recently, Aung San Suu Kyi have taken public stands for great commitments that matter politically, nationally and internationally. Suffragettes such as Mrs Garrud fought for similarly great commitments in taking a stand to have women legally recognised as *persons*. Garrud's ju-jitsu training no doubt contributed to her ability to stand for what mattered politically. My aim has been to show that martial arts training allows us to stand for what matters morally. Until violence

against women is eradicated or at least diminished significantly, martial arts training proves an opportune route to withstanding its challenges to integrity and autonomy.

My argument is limited to the general aim of showing that women gain self-confidence through martial arts training which, along with physical skills in self-defence, better situates women to stand for their commitments than those lacking such training. Self-defence classes, and in particular feminist self-defence classes, focus more on women's practical assertive responses and common forms of threats or attacks and so appear to do more than martial arts training to overcome feminine socialisation in vulnerability. If that is correct it well explains why empirical research shows self-defence classes are more tightly correlated with improved skill self-confidence and improved overall self-confidence. Martial arts training may move closer or further away from the self-defence model depending on style, instructor, and whether training is traditional or competition-oriented. Further research might account for the impact such differences have on self-confidence. As a philosophical analysis, my account is open to further expansion and revision in light of new research in psychology, martial arts, and violence against women. I welcome research in these areas focusing on positive responses we can engage in to counter women's socialisation in fear and vulnerability to violence and most importantly, to counter violence against women.

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# 4

# THE MARTIAL ARTS AS PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

*Henry Martyn Lloyd*

## Introduction: the practice of the philosophy of martial arts

What is the philosophy of martial arts? To attempt to answer this question from the tradition of European philosophy is to severely limit the field of answers. Since the late eighteenth century European philosophy has been a discipline more or less exclusively situated in universities and it is not immediately clear how this highly abstract and professionalised tradition can usefully engage with the embodied sweat and tumble which is the domain of the fighting arts. It seems likely that the perspective will be external, imposed, and critical rather than illuminating. And of course the practices the contemporary Occident identifies as 'the martial arts' have their historical and ideological origins in the Orient; the West's indigenous martial practices have all but disappeared from view. Given this, if we are to speak of the philosophy of martial arts we must at least extend our definition of philosophy to include oriental philosophy/spirituality. In fact, commonly understood, to speak of the philosophy of martial arts *is* simply to speak of some aspect of oriental philosophy/spirituality, generally some part of the Japanese and/or Chinese traditions of Shintō, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. But this approach is limiting too, though less obviously so. If we presume that the philosophy of martial arts is some subset of oriental spirituality while at the same time presuming that the martial arts (or in any event the true, best, or philosophically interesting ones) are those which are historically or philosophically proximate to some version of oriental spirituality, we have severely reduced the field of answers to our question. Or rather, we have in broad terms *already* answered our question and so have only left open to us investigations into the more or less interesting nuances of a presupposed subject.

In this chapter I propose neither to approach the question by presuming philosophy to be a tradition or canon based in the occidental university, nor by

presuming the philosophy of martial arts to be based in an already located series of traditions which originate in the Orient. Rather I shall approach the question from the perspective of the practice of the martial or fighting arts themselves. I shall do so with the idea that practices too can be philosophy. The question I will be addressing then is this: What are the practices of the philosophies of martial arts? My understanding of philosophy as a practice will rely on the work of Pierre Hadot and his understanding of 'philosophy as a way of life,' and on Michel Foucault's late work on 'the care of the self.' In the first part of this chapter I will discuss this understanding of philosophy and establish the conceptual architecture on which this chapter will rely. In the second part I will examine two of the major texts of classical *bushidō*, Takuan's *The Unfettered Mind* and Tsunetomo's *Hagakure*. This part will serve to juxtapose Greek and Roman systems of philosophy as Foucault and Hadot read them and *bushidō* systems of remarkably similar content. I will then examine the martial arts as they are practiced in the contemporary Occident. The second and third parts of this chapter will then examine in their historical and contemporary situations some specific martial practices and in so doing provide the question of the philosophy of martial arts with a series of historically specific answers. In doing this I will show, firstly, the historical continuity between the spirituality or *ascesis* of Tokugawa *Bushidō* and that of the martial arts as practiced in the contemporary Occident, and secondly, the historical contingency of the relationship between martial arts and virtue.

There is a widely drawn distinction between the martial arts and 'mere' martial techniques and fighting sports; 'true' or 'high' martial arts are held to have 'spiritual or humanistic value' and so are distinguished from those which are 'practiced merely for athletic prowess or street-smart fighting' (Keenan 1989, 285; see also: Bäck 2009; Monahan 2012). In the terms of the Japanese martial traditions (on which, for purely practical reasons, this chapter will generally focus) a distinction is often made between *jutsu* which is concerned with combat effectiveness, and *budō* which is concerned with spiritual and moral cultivation (McFarlane 1990, 403; Hurst 1998, 1–6). Despite warnings that this distinction is highly unstable or arbitrary it remains remarkably persistent, an effect of the double presupposition involved in defining the martial arts in the terms of oriental spirituality while at the same time defining the particular spirituality in terms of the martial practices: any practice which falls outside this predetermined circle is already understood in pejorative terms. And so, to invoke one example, though Damon Young encourages us to be wary of 'reifying the distinction between martial arts (*budō*) and martial sports (*jutsu*)' his article 'Bowing to our Enemies: Courtesy, *budō*, and Japan' both presumes and concludes that 'courtesy is essential to the martial arts at their best' (Young 2009, 203, 222 of this volume).[1] As will become evident, one effect of my approach is to 'flatten' martial practices and consider the 'high' and the 'low' on the same level. I will do this not by showing that there is no distinction between *budō* and *jutsu*—I will continue to use the term *budō* for spiritual cultivation in the 'traditional/oriental' mode and *jutsu* to designate forms of fighting

technique—but rather by arguing that all forms of martial practice can be understood in terms of spiritual and ethical cultivation. In concluding I will argue that there is a merely contingent relationship between a training in the fighting arts and a training in virtue or morality and that even in the case of the 'high' or 'best' martial arts there is no reason for one to necessarily determine the other or for the form of spirituality present to be morally estimable. Given this I will conclude by raising the question of whether the martial arts should in fact be practiced as such.

## 1 The care of the self; philosophy as a way of life

Michel Foucault has become a major reference for the humanities and social sciences. This is largely because the thematic development of his *oeuvre* provides something of interest to a broad field of researchers and because his work is always part historical/empirical and part philosophical/theoretical. Foucault provides a broad range of conceptual tools with which to critically or descriptively engage with particular modes of subjectivity as they have been constructed historically and in the contemporary period. This chapter will use Foucault's 'late' work, that which is exemplified by the *History of Sexuality* volumes two and three, and which considers systems of care for the self, systems by which the subject aligns themselves to truth (Foucault 1990; 1992). Less well known is Pierre Hadot who was a major influence on Foucault, particularly in this period. Their work is thematically highly consistent: both Hadot and Foucault studied ancient philosophy and identified in it fundamental differences from philosophy as it has been conceived of in the Occident, particularly in the modern period. Where modern philosophy has almost exclusively been a discourse generally located inside the academy, ancient philosophy focused on modes of life. The difference can be illustrated by the Stoic distinction between a '*discourse about* philosophy and *philosophy itself*' (Hadot 1995, 266). Ancient philosophy was 'a mode of existing-in-the-world, which had to be practiced at each instant, and the goal of which was to transform the whole of the individual's life' (Hadot 1995, 265).

In Foucault's terms the foundation of ancient philosophy was the call to take 'care of the self'; the relationship one ought to have with oneself was an ethical call: philosophy was the development of an *ēthos*, an individual character which was representative of one's values or beliefs (Foucault 1994f, 226; 2005, 2–3; 1994c, 263). This relationship with the self was an aesthetics of existence, the practices by which the care was carried out were 'arts of existence' or 'arts of living' (Foucault 1994c, 262). These practices provided the individual with techniques for operations on their own body, soul, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, and so provided ways in which the subject could transform themselves in order to attain a state of happiness, purity, wisdom, or perfection. That is, they were the intentional and voluntary systems of action or exercise by which the individual sought to transform or create themselves, to make their lives into an *oeuvre* that carried aesthetic or stylistic values (Foucault 1994a, 291;

1994c, 254–262; 1992, 10–11; Hadot 1995, 268). Philosophy was a practice which positioned oneself in relation to truth. So understood philosophy was the form of thought that asked 'what it is that enables the subject to have access to the truth, and which attempts to determine the conditions and limits of the subject's access to the truth' (Foucault 2005, 15). Spirituality in turn was understood as the 'search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on [themself] in order to have access to the truth' (Foucault 2005, 15). Philosophical dialogue was one of the practices by which this was done. But this was only one of a number of practices and its importance ought not to be overemphasized. Hence, the question of truth emerged not in the form of an abstract philosophical/epistemological question but rather in the form of questions such as: 'What is involved in the case of the subject and of the truth? And: What is the relationship of the subject to truth? What is the subject of truth, what is the subject who speaks the truth?' (Foucault 2005, 189).

Foucault classifies the care of the self as having four modes that can be usefully understood to equate to the Greeks' four causes (Sharpe 2005). These form the theoretical architecture of Foucault's 'late' work and will be central to the work of this chapter. First, systems of care of the self show what is the aspect or part of the self, the 'material' or 'substance,' that is concerned with moral conduct and with truth. Foucault demonstrates that, in a post-Kantian society, intentions constitute the salient aspect of the self; in Christian terms, it is desire; in contemporary society, it is feelings, love of a partner (Foucault 1994c, 263). Second, the 'mode' or 'formal cause' provides a way in which the subject is incited to recognise their ethical obligations, for example: divine law, natural law, a cosmological order or rational rule, or by an attempt to give your life the most beautiful form possible (Foucault 1994c, 264). Third, the 'means' or 'efficient cause' by which the subject can become ethical, the work which needs to be performed on the self. This is the self-forming activity of the care, the technologies of the self (Foucault 1994c, 265). Much of the detail of Foucault and Hadot's scholarly work focuses on particular practices, the technologies of the self themselves and on the varieties of asceses, spiritual exercises or disciplines, by which care is undertaken and by which the subject aligns towards truth (Foucault 2005, 46; Hadot 1995, 82). The study of the care of the self is then the study of *practices* or spiritual exercises by which philosophy operates as therapeutics, and which organise the subject in a particular way directed towards a particular truth (Foucault 2005, 333; Hadot 1995, 87). Fourth, systems of care must show the 'final cause' or *telos* that orients the system of care, the kind of being to which the subject aspires when they behave in a moral way, for example, to become pure, free, or masters of themselves (Foucault 1994c, 265).

It is important also to note that the modes by which the self cares for itself are always historically specific. Much of Foucault's 'late' work develops Hadot's studies on the historically specific manner by which philosophy has been a way of life. In the first instance, Foucault shows the manner in which ancient philosophy undertook the care for the self by discursive reflection on the

virtues and right conduct and their call for the cultivation of such things as wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage (Foucault 1994f, 229–230). These systems developed into the care for the self as undertaken in the practice of asceticism such as Epicurean, Stoic, and early Christian ascetic practices. These practices included habitual self-reflection in the sense of exercises for committing to memory the things one has learnt (Foucault 1994f, 227; 1994b, 101). They also included physical training in endurance and abstinence or privation. They included meditation, that is, training in thought alone. And they included training in imaginary and real situations, even if the situations had been artificially induced, for example, exercises in sexual abstinence, physical privation, and other rituals of purification (Foucault 1994d, 240). Perhaps the most famous of these practices is the Stoic meditation on death (Foucault 1994b, 102–104; Hadot 1995, 93–101). Foucault also notes the importance of writing as a technology: the taking of notes on oneself in order that they be reread at a later time; the writing of treatises and letters to friends in order to help them in their care of the self; and the keeping of notebooks in order to reactivate for oneself the truths one needed (Foucault 1994f, 232; 1994d). As the care of the self developed in the early Christian period, there came to be an increased emphasis on care as undertaken by the emergence of a new technology: the self as constituted through obedience, the sacrifice of the self and of the subject's own will, to a master or teacher (Foucault 1994d, 246). This development saw a movement away from the practice of dialogues and towards the increased significance of the pedagogical relationship between the master and the teacher. Silence became important and truth was now found not in oneself but in the teachings of masters (Foucault 1994d, 235–238).

In the following two sections this chapter will use the conceptual architecture provided by Foucault to analyse the martial arts in their historical specificity. For Foucault, systems of care of the self are suggested or given to individuals in every civilisation though there is no suggestion in Foucault that the *content* of the care is ahistorical (Foucault 1994e, 87). I will, in the next section, examine the martial arts by showing the resemblance between the systems of the care of the self as studied directly by Foucault and Hadot and that of Tokugawa *Bushidō*: in terms of content, the asceses which emerges are in fact remarkably similar. I will then in part three examine the asceses of the martial arts as practiced in the contemporary Occident showing both the continued presence of *budō* and the incorporation of modern empirical modes by which the subject aligns themselves to truth.

## 2 Tokugawa *Bushidō*

Rather than attempting a broad survey of the history of the martial arts I will instead focus on two particular texts from the Japanese martial tradition. The texts represent the central aspect of a canon which may be taken as emblematic of the practices of classical *bushidō* even if only in a normative and not descriptive sense, and even without claiming that there was one school called

'*bushidō*' or that the Tokugawa samurai would have used the term to describe their *ēthos* (Hurst 1990, 515 and 522). Study of these texts is warranted too by their continued influence on contemporary occidental martial arts: this aspect of martial practice will be taken up in the third part of this chapter.

What can be understood in contemporary terms to be the Japanese martial arts began in Japan during the Tokugawa period which started in 1603 and continued until the Meiji restoration of 1868. This was a prolonged period of peace where the purely warlike side of the *bushidō* ethic—simple ideas of the warrior, loyalty, honour, courage, martial prowess, and parsimonious living—began to be developed into a sophisticated theoretical and practical edifice. As the actual practice of warfare became historically distant the continued survival of martial practices required that they develop a new *raison d'être* (Hurst 1998, 54). Martial practitioners developed their practices in two complementary ways. First, physicians stressed their recreational and physical fitness aspects (Hurst 1998, 75–76). Martial techniques were adapted to become martial 'sports'—though it is not quite clear if this modern term is easily applied to the activities of this period in Japanese history—and became professionalised forming major schools. *Kata*, a series of choreographed and stylised movements practiced either alone or in pairs, became (and in many instances remain) the major pedagogical technique for the training of dangerous techniques (Hurst 1998, 75–76). It was also during this period that martial arts began to be practiced for religious or quasi-religious purposes. Combat techniques began to be mixed with Confucian and Neo-Confucian scholasticism, and Buddhist and Taoist philosophical and religious practices. Martial arts began to be practiced in order that the adept discover or develop their innermost self, develop a heightened degree of mental awareness, and even achieve enlightenment in a Zen or Taoist sense (Blomberg 1995, 187; Hurst 1998, 53–81).

A series of three short texts, today published under the title *The Unfettered Mind*, clearly shows the merging of martial techniques with that of Zen theory and practice (Takuan 2002). Written at the beginning of the Tokugawa period by Takuan Sōhō (1573–1645), a Zen monk, calligrapher, painter, and prodigious author, the texts were highly influential for the swordsmen of the Tokugawa period. Takuan shows the fundamental similarity of the mental comportment necessary for effective sword fighting, here meaning the maintenance of an 'empty-mind' not fixed on anything, and that of Zen meditation. In the text the influence of the Zen koan is clear as is the Buddhist metaphysic of emptiness.

> When the Zen priest at Kamakura, Magaku, was captured during the disturbances in China and was at the point of being cut down, he quoted the *gatha*, 'with the speed of a flash of lightning,/Cut through the spring breeze,' and the soldier threw down his sword and fled.
>
> Magaku meant that in wielding the sword, the infinitesimal time it takes lightning to strike, there is neither mind nor thought. For the

> striking sword, there is no mind. The attacker is Emptiness. His sword is Emptiness. I, who am about to be struck, am Emptiness.
>
> *Takuan 2002, 55*

With the drawing together of meditative practices and technical training, martial training became a meditative tool (Takuan 2002, 57). In the first instance this linkage was instrumental: correct mental comportment was a means to good swordsmanship and therefore had martial value. Yet the text makes it clear that right-mindedness, the cessation of desire, the Buddhist fourth noble truth, is beyond martial prowess and is of the ultimate importance (Takuan 2002, 79). Here, as *bushidō* merged with Zen, the truth to which the subject is aspiring is that of the emptiness of all things, the manner of acceding to that truth, of converting or transforming the self, is that of meditation and of martial practice as meditation. In Foucauldian terms, right-mindedness can be understood to be the 'substance' of the care of the self. The fourth noble truth, enlightenment, the cessation of desire, is the 'final' cause. And meditation, either in its purely religious (perhaps monastic) form or here in the form of martial training, is the 'means.'

Meditation may be to modern philosophy the most accessible example of philosophy as a practice and so the most easily represented as a practice of spirituality (see: Hadot 1995, 85–86; Foucault 2005, 11). But it ought not to be taken as paradigmatic just because of this. There are many technologies available for care of the self, meditation is one, philosophical dialogue another, physical training another, and so too are practical exercises which include fulfilling the duties of social life and entail practical forms of behaviour (Hadot 1995, 86). And neither Takuan's aspect of truth nor meditation as the means of coming to truth are stable across Tokugawa *Bushidō.* There is a development within the tradition, and 100 years into the Tokugawa peace the second major text of the tradition, the *Hagakure*, represents the care of the self in a subtly different manner, de-emphasizing the religious aspect of *bushidō* for the martial.

The *Hagakure*[2] was dictated by Tsunetomo Yamamoto between 1709 and 1716. It is an impassioned call for the reinvigoration of the samurai class with a *bushidō* spirit freed from academic Neo-Confucian rhetoric. Tsunetomo sought to make manly, self-asserting samurai out of what he felt were increasingly effeminate peacetime bureaucrats, to make them stern, reverential men, armed with self-composure and a firm mind, but also high-spirited and vigorous (Blomberg 1995, 177–179, 189; Mukoh 1980, 5, 10, 18). The development between this text and *The Unfettered Mind* is a development in terms of the ultimate truth by which the subject constitutes themselves: the manner of ascending to that truth is no longer understood in terms of a metaphysic of emptiness, rather it is understood as honourable conduct. The text is more Confucian in this aspect than Buddhist, though no less spiritual for this. Narrowly interpreted the text is a philosophy of dying. More broadly construed it is a philosophy of honour and shame. Its opening passage is famous:

> *Bushidō*, I have found out, lies in dying. When confronted with two alternatives, life and death, one is to choose death without hesitation. There is nothing particularly difficult; one has only to be resolved and push forward.
>
> While some say, 'death without gaining one's end is but a futile death' such a calculating way of thinking comes from conceited, citified *bushidō*. Pressed between two alternatives, one can hardly be sure of choosing the righteous of the two. To be sure, everybody prefers life to death; he tends to reason himself into staying alive somehow. But if he comes out alive without gaining his righteous end, he is a coward. Therein lies a crucial point to consider.
>
> Conversely, as long as one's choice is death, even if he died without accomplishing his just aim, his death is free of disgrace, although others may term it as a vain or insane one. This is the essence of *bushidō*.
>
> *Tsunetomo 1980, 35*

The emphasis on meditation is still present although the truth by which the subject constitutes themself has changed. To be ready to die at the right moment and in the right manner requires preparation, and for this the *Hagakure* advocates a close parallel of the Stoic meditation on death (Tsunetomo 1980, 150). The *Hagakure* places supreme importance on dying, not on loyalty to the samurai's liege lord as might be expected. But it is because of their relationship to death that the samurai may, first, avoid shame—the *Hagakure* approves of honourable sword fights to keep a samurai from shame in truly unavoidable circumstances, even if such acts are in direct conflict with a retainer's obligations—and second, serve his lord selflessly and without encumbrance (Mukoh 1980, 5–9; Tsunetomo 1980, 35).

Rather than conceiving of the relationship between lord and retainer as one bound by rules and codes, Tsunetomo conceives of it as a personal, emotional, perhaps even a sentimental, bond. 'The retainer,' he argues, 'first of all has to hold his lord high in his mind with unflinching devotion' (Mukoh 1980, 7; Tsunetomo 1980, 35). That is, the text seeks to cultivate the relationship between samurai and lord by cultivating correct mental comportment and right emotion rather than by advising the samurai to follow a strict code. The correct mental attitude is linked to self-mastery and self-overcoming.

> I know not how to defeat others; I only know how to win over myself. Lifetime pursuit knows no end; one has to find himself improved after each day's training, striving toward perfection for the entire course of his life.
>
> *Tsunetomo 1980, 50*

> To conquer means to conquer one's allies. To conquer one's allies means to conquer oneself. To conquer oneself means to conquer the situation and turn it to his favour by his will power. Unless one's body and soul are

> hardened like steel to lead tens of thousands of samurai of his side, [one] cannot win a victory over the enemy.
>
> *Tsunetomo 1980, 124*

And finally the *Hagakure*, in its more Confucian aspects, is filled with advice on correct conduct:[3] from advice on care in remonstrating others (Tsunetomo 1980, 40); advice on how to stifle yawns and sneezes the better to avoid looking foolish (ibid., 41); on the right consumption of alcohol (ibid., 44, 59); on the maintenance of a robust masculine disposition (ibid., 45–46); on keeping from making incautious remarks (ibid., 97); on the consultation of others in pursuit of truth (ibid., 49); on the use of encouraging words and the provision of kindness to visitors (ibid., 60); on the careful use of words (ibid., 62); on looking habitually in the mirror in order to maintain one's appearance, as right appearance speaks of dignity and corresponding depth of character (ibid., 64, 95); on not fearing failure (ibid., 73); and even on the regular use of a toothpick (ibid., 56).

In terms of Foucault's 'four causes,' we can understand that, for the *Hagakure*, it is a samurai's honour that is the 'substance' concerned with moral conduct; it is the pursuit of *bushidō* which provides the 'mode' or manner in which samurai recognise their moral obligations. The text provides advice on a host of specific techniques for the cultivation of correct mental comportment, self-mastery, and honourable behaviour. That is, it provides specific 'means' by which the samurai can create themselves as ethical subjects. And finally the text provides an enormous number of concrete examples of the kind of subject, the 'end,' the samurai can aspire to in constructing themselves as an ethical subject.

For Foucault the specific forms of care for the self will always be historically situated and systems cannot be taken from one period and transplanted into another. *The Unfettered Mind* and the *Hagakure* were written during a period where in Europe the importance of the care of the self had been subsumed by moralities which were grounded in relations to others, where Christian self-renunciation was the norm and where the Greek precept 'care for the self' had been subsumed by the precept 'know the self.' Yet, between the Greek and Roman texts that Foucault studied and those of classical *bushidō*, there can be found a striking number of similarities even in the very practices themselves.[4] In both cases the technologies include practices such as meditation on death and habitual reflection on the actions of the self, physical and ethical training in real or imagined situations, the formation of relations of obedience or allegiance to a master, and self-sacrifice.

## 3 The asceses of contemporary occidental martial arts

The story of the way in which Tokugawa *Bushidō* developed into the various Japanese martial arts with which the Occident is today familiar is complex and interesting. It is the story of the decline of the martial pursuits after the Meiji

restoration, of the disarming of the samurai and so of the martial arts' increasing focus on unarmed fighting techniques, of the restoration of some of the classical arts in the pre-war nationalist period, of the impact of the occupation which suppressed those arts which had most closely been associated with Japanese nationalism (but not of Karate which had developed in Okinawa), and of the development of the modern martial arts and the integration of these arts into the West, in the first instance Karate but in its wake other styles such as Jujitsu, Judo, and Aikido (Donohue 1994, 33–51; Blomberg 1995; Hurst 1998; Draeger 1996). And there is a parallel story to be told for the importation of Chinese martial arts. This importation of generally East-Asian martial arts into the Occident has occluded the indigenous martial traditions—boxing, fencing, wrestling, and so on—such that today 'the martial arts' are generally held to be synonymous with 'East-Asian martial arts' and boxers, for example, tend to think of themselves as engaging in a sport, if perhaps a fighting sport, rather than a martial art.

The contemporary Occident has a fascination with the martial arts. Clubs are omnipresent as are images of martial artists in popular entertainment. A very large number of people train or have trained in one or more of the many diverse styles available. Typically, many varied justifications for this fascination are offered: practitioners will justify their art in terms of the desire to acquire some self-defence techniques; they will speak in terms of the health benefits they gain from training; they will offer some sort of philosophical or overtly spiritual justification; or they will speak of a love of physical competition. Broadly speaking, contemporary martial artists situate themselves in terms of the truth of their practice in one or more of three different ways. First, a style may construct the truth of its practice in terms of a direct lineage which descends from an idealised historical period. Martial arts legends or folk histories feed the idea of a 'true' martial art. These legends constitute a means of interpreting the practices and of organising the behaviour of those who participate in them, and as such are of genuine interest to, for example, anthropologists and sociologists though we may note that purely in historical terms these stories are at best dubious (see: Green 2003; Henning 1981). Second, a style may construct its truth in terms of its effectiveness as *jutsu*. Often this justification will merge with the first and appeal to a legendary period where the style was actually used in combat; often it will appeal to effectiveness in the person of the style's master or sensei; or it will appeal to effectiveness in the form of success in martial sports or other competitions; and in some styles it will refer to its effectiveness in actual street fights. Third, a style may align itself to a version of 'traditional' *budō* often, as will be illustrated here, taken directly from the texts of classical *bushidō*.

At least in the popular mind the major reason that martial artists practice is for the purposes of self-defence: the basic truth towards which the practitioner comports themselves is that of remaining safe and maintaining their bodily integrity in times of danger. However, these conceptions have a low explanatory power *vis-à-vis* those who engage in the practice at any level beyond short

courses in self-defence. It may explain why students walk into *dōjō* for the first time, but it does not explain why they keep doing so, often for very many years. This is largely because in terms of their use in *actual* combat the martial arts are extremely inefficient practices (Donohue 1994, 27; Keenan 1989, 286). It is common knowledge that it takes several years of training, perhaps four or five hours a week, before any martial art begins to become useful in any sort of violent encounter or combat scenario. This inefficacy is accentuated by the fact that violent encounters of the sort where several years of training become functional are not particularly common, particularly for those who are even somewhat active in avoiding them. And of course it takes very many years, perhaps the better part of a lifetime, before an adept can attain an ability which is anything like the reputed lethal nature of the martial arts. Finally, most martial artists are peaceful people outside of the training hall. In fact one of the truisms associated with martial artists is that the more proficient a practitioner becomes the *less* likely they are to become involved in an actual fight and so have need of their skills (Spencer 2009, 138). Nevertheless the perception that the martial arts are a practical way of enabling the practitioner to deal with violence is pervasive. It can be concluded then that,

> while in the hands of an extremely gifted and experienced individual [martial arts] can be a devastating self-defence, for most practitioners, [it is] a type of physically demanding play-acting [...] it is a kind of combat simulation, but it is nonetheless activity that is extremely significant.
>
> *Donohue 1994, 83*

So why *do* so many people engage in this sort of play-acting?

Donohue, in his anthropological study of the martial arts in the Occident, argues that the appeal of the martial arts lies in the fact that 'fundamental questions of human existence' are 'central to the problematic questions for contemporary culture, questions about power, the quest of control, the search for identity, and the relationship of the individual to the group' (Donohue 1994, 4). More significant than their physical element, and even as the martial artist professes to be engaged in a physical practice, for Donohue the martial arts represent attempts by individuals to generate a coherent and empowering worldview. They are an attempt to inject life with meaning, to develop mechanisms for relating to other subjects and to their world (Donohue 1994, 4–5). Donohue emphasizes the symbolic or aesthetic element of the practice of martial arts: to fit with Western exceptions they 'must be exotic, relatively rare, [and] have a high dose of mysticism' (Donohue 1994, 11). As I have noted, martial arts do tend to seek justification in legends or 'folk histories.' They also tend to reproduce an oriental aesthetic and thus are essentially mechanisms for the perpetuation of social or aesthetic identities. We may note for example, that beyond the West's current fetish for Asian scripts, it is not uncommon for martial artists to have tattoos which represent their allegiance to a particular style, philosophy, or *budō*. More substantively, within this 'orientalism,' the

martial arts often reproduce a quasi-*bushidō* philosophic/meditative system. The continued mass-market publication of texts such as the *Hagakure* and *The Unfettered Mind* is owed almost exclusively to their interest for contemporary practitioners of the martial arts. Yet, these practices serve an active social function, they are more than just 'museums in motion,' and the rewards of training in them are, for the practitioner, intensely personal ones (Donohue 1994, 4). Without using Foucauldian theory, Donohue invokes with surprising precision a conception of the care of the self. For the practitioner, the martial arts are a means by which a personal identity is forged through significant affiliation to a system radically different to a prevailing Western aesthetic or ideology. That is, the participant works to create themself as a subject through meaningful identification with the rich cultural and symbolic truths that are present in these practices.

In so heavily stressing the inefficient nature of martial arts as combat techniques, Donahue is over-arguing an otherwise sound point. Rather than in terms of history, aesthetics, or philosophy, some styles expressly organise their practice according to the system's effectiveness as *jutsu*, a truth demonstrable in competition, in heavy sparring and, occasionally (though often this aspect is overlaid with a heavy symbolic or legendary aspect) in *actual* street violence. Young aggressive martial artists, just like young football players, in instantiating their identities through their practices, deliberately find their way *into* violent encounters in order to test or prove themselves and their *jutsu*; it is important to acknowledge that training in combat-oriented martial arts may lead the practitioner to *perpetrate* violent encounters rather than merely equipping them to *respond* to violence where they have no other choice.

We may take a contemporary text written about Kyokushin Karate and its founder Masutatsu Oyama, as an example of a style that organises its truth in terms of combat effectiveness. In order to test his strength and establish the truth of his Karate, Oyama made himself famous by fighting bulls with his bare hands, apparently fighting 52 of them, killing three instantly. He travelled to the United States to display his style and there fought and won against 270 opponents (Quinn 1987, 46). Kyokushin continues to have a heavy emphasis on combat, particularly on heavy sparring and competition, and is justified as being an 'art of life which teaches its practitioners to effectively defend themselves and others in times of personal threat' (Quinn 1987, 25 and 65–72).

Yet beyond pure physicality or *jutsu*, the style places overt emphasis on spirituality or *budō*, on the ability of the practitioner to master themselves by virtue of the practice. According to the text, Oyama's great power is not mysterious:

> The so-called mystery of the art survives to a degree among those who know little about it. To someone who has trained however, the only real mystery involved is the positive transformation which takes place in their attitude through years of hard training. Put simply, they come to see life as a warrior. [...] The master's mysterious aura is nothing more

> than a reflection of what *anyone* can achieve with the same discipline to pursue a righteous path of training.
>
> *Quinn 1987, 25*

With clear echoes of Tokugawa *Bushidō*, in establishing its truth, emphasis here is ultimately placed on the 'positive transformation' of the subject's 'attitude' repeating the move beyond mere fighting prowess to a 'completely fulfilled way of life.' References to the master's 'aura' of 'power and confidence' perpetuate, for example, the legendary stories of the Tokugawa period. The continued presence of *The Unfettered Mind*'s foregrounding of Zen meditation is, in contemporary practice, well represented in *kata* focused on, in the early stages, correct breathing, and later, on empty-mindedness. Beyond correct mental comportment, the positive transformation is represented in terms of honourable conduct, in terms of a 'platform of righteousness and thoughtfulness.' 'The true *karate-ka* is calm, courageous, alert, humble, happy, and healthy' (Quinn 1987, 25).

I do not want to suggest that, for martial arts to be practices of philosophy, they need to replicate Tokugawa *Bushidō* with anything like exactitude or perpetrate any specific set of teachings found in the texts of that period. And obviously there is here too a divergence between the normative and the descriptive representations of the practice. Yet the key features of the care of the self seem clear: the martial arts as spiritual practices are systems by which the subject aligns themself towards truth.

Kyokushin maintains a strong link between the truths of classical *bushidō* and of contemporary real-world effectiveness in violent encounters. Its *jutsu* is constructed in parallel with a 'traditional' *budō* and, in this sense, Kyokushin's rhetoric confirms the stereotypical notions of the place of 'eastern spirituality' within the philosophy of martial arts. But there are contemporary combat-oriented martial arts which justify their *jutsu* with no reference whatsoever to an ongoing tradition of *budō* but do so in a distinctly modern, utilitarian, and empirical *ēthos*. There are several examples I could use but I shall focus on the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) and on the style which has emerged from it as Mixed Martial Arts (MMA).

Founded in the early 1990s for the cable TV market, the UFC emphasized the ferocity and ruthlessness of their fights. For the general public, the cage or octagon in which fights occurred, became 'symbolic of the event's bestiality, something which marketing companies took full advantage of [...] words and images were all chosen to emphasize that this was the ultimate test of strength: two men facing each other in the ring without any rules' (Bottenbury and Heilbron 2006, 260; see also: Spencer 2009, 121). Copy-cat variants quickly mushroomed with diverse brand names. For the martial arts community, the competition allowed fighters from many different traditions to compete against each other in very lightly regulated fights. According to martial arts periodicals, these 'realistic' contests ushered in a new age in the history of the martial arts. The rapidly developing contests provoked a race

for increased efficacy, and the octagon became a 'locus of objectivity' (Downey 2007, 208). The truth towards which the practice comports itself is that of empirical or quasi-scientific effectiveness and of the 'reality' of no-rules fighting (Downey 2007, 220). The widespread outrage at the brutality of the 'revolting' or 'barbaric' events fuelled interest though, for a while, it also threatened to prevent the events occurring. Organisers tightened rules outlawing headbutts and the breaking of fingers, they introduced weight categories, and replaced the hyper-aggressive competition names with the milder 'Mixed Martial Arts' (Bottenbury and Heilbron 2006, 264). MMA clubs proliferated, rapidly trading on the notion that of all the martial arts the style was the most effective in 'real' fights. Today MMA is a recognised style. It integrates multiple styles including Brazilian Jujitsu, Muay Thai, Judo, wrestling, and Western boxing (Spencer 2009, 122; Downey 2007, 208). This eclecticism operates strictly in the pursuit of effectiveness in competition or combat and with no emphasis on what may be recognised as *budō* or fidelity to an ongoing martial tradition (Spencer 2009, 127). It places no emphasis on *kata* or other ritualised aspects of more 'traditional martial arts' but focuses instead on heavy sparring and fighting (Spencer 2009, 137).

The notion of the 'reality' of MMA fights needs to be treated with some caution.[5] The emergence of the style was dominated by the need to provide a spectacle of violence to an audience whose expectations had been set by fictional representations of martial arts largely in film, while appeasing those who were horrified by the glorification of violence and sought to ban the events. This balancing act occurred in a commercial environment where US media companies were trying to exploit new markets not already dominated by established television networks (Bottenbury and Heilbron 2006, 270–271; Downey 2007, 220). The idea that the platform allowed martial artists of all and any style to enter into competition in an environment as close to unregulated as possible was a construction within this environment. As with boxing before it, the introduction of gloves paradoxically appeased the critics while at the same time heightening the spectacle of violence and (arguably) the risk of injury by encouraging fighters to strike rather than wrestle. Neither the safety of the fighters, nor the preservation of the 'reality' of combat were important considerations. This is to say that the truth of MMA ought not to be privileged against the other truths which this chapter has considered. It is naïve to suppose that behind various cultural practices there is an 'objective' truth of the nature of human violence which can be discovered in unregulated fights, whether they occur in dark alleys or brightly lit cages (Downey 2007, 207, see also 222). Justifications then of MMA in terms of the truth of 'real' combat and with no emphasis on *budō* ought not to be taken to evacuate this practice of its spiritual component. For those who train in MMA clubs, the practice remains an ascesis, a practice of the self. The specific technologies of the style, repetitive conditioning drills which instil technique and habituate the practitioner to the style's very great physical rigours, and the submission of the fighter to the science of the coach or trainer, all orient the practitioner towards the truth of

combat (Spencer 2009, 128). The physical training moulds the body of the fighters and in doing so constructs their subjectivity, impacting on how they see themselves and are seen both within and outside the MMA community. Training is integral to fighters' self-formation but so too is actual fighting. Dale Spencer argues that, within the MMA culture, one dimension of the signification of a fighter is in a widely accepted rite of passage which is a professional fight (Spencer 2009, 135). The style's comportment towards the truth of 'real' combat is such that an act of fighting itself becomes essential to the self-formation of the fighters:

> For contestants the [MMA] events provided a rare opportunity to display their masculinity and their strength legitimately in a fight. The importance of the symbolic meaning of this ultimate test of virility is clear from the large number of men who signed up, willing to enter the ring for less than $100.
>
> *Bottenbury and Heilbron 2006, 275*

The ultimate truth of the art is the 'locus of objectivity' that is the ring.

The proximity here to cultures of masculinity and violence is neither incidental nor innocent. The importance of 'body capital' in industries such as that of night-club security has been noted by both anthropologists and criminologists. Body capital here specifically is understood as comprising build and acquired technologies of the body. Body building, martial arts, and/or hard won experience in the industry are implicated in the social construction of competence (Managhan 2002, 335 and 342–344; See also: Hobbes et al. 2002, 359; Bottenbury and Heilbron 2006). The *ēthos* here is a long way from that of the 'high' martial arts: the truth of violence is understood in terms of ruthlessness, efficiency, and brutality. Here the rite of passage of 'real' fighting happens outside of the ring or cage and generally without cameras to record the action.

What can be said then of the contemporary practices of martial arts? In terms of Foucault's four 'causes,' typically the contemporary martial arts may suggest as the 'substance' honour or courage, physical integrity, or meditative calm or right-thinking. The arts may refer to the 'mode' by which the martial artist recognises their moral obligations as being in allegiance to a continuing martial tradition within which the artist participates, to a quasi-*bushidō* ethical, religious, or philosophical system, or to the empirical truth of 'real' fighting. Or they may identify with a heavily symbolic orientalism associated with their practices. Or the martial arts may invoke a moral subject who has attained mastery of themselves and others either by virtue of their combat prowess and discipline, or by their access to enlightened thought. Of course the martial arts provide a readily identifiable system of 'means,' the technologies by which the subject works on themselves. Very heavy emphasis is placed on physical training including *kata*, or on 'real' fighting either in a ring, cage, or 'on the street,' and to training in imagined situations. And even in contemporary terms, the technologies include obedience or allegiance to a master or sensei,

and to an ongoing tradition, sacrifice of the self, habitual reflection on the actions of the self, and on meditation. Finally, they offer the 'final cause' in the guise of exemplars, such as Mas Oyama, but more often in the readily accessible guise of the style's instructor or sensei, or in the guise of the subject of violence and masculinity located in cultures of violence.

## Conclusion: morality and the practice of martial arts

Damon Young holds that 'courtesy is essential to the martial arts at their best' (Young 2009, 188 and 192): I am sure he would agree when I add that many other virtues are also essential to the practice of martial arts. But it is banal in the extreme to point out that the martial arts are not always practiced at their 'best' or that *budō* is often completely abandoned in favour of the sometimes brutal effectiveness of *jutsu*. In discussing the philosophy of the martial arts, it is often presumed that we have already taken *budō* as the subject of discussion: to invoke just one rather blatant example, Allan Bäck, after meticulously excluding a wide variety of martial and sporting practices from his presupposed idea of what 'traditional' or 'philosophical' martial arts constitute, has no difficulty at all concluding that, such is the relationship between the martial arts and virtue, Gandhi himself 'regretted not studying the martial arts' (Bäck 2009, 234). I have sought to avoid this presumption and have first understood the martial arts to be fighting practices *simpliciter* and only then inquired into the modes of asceses involved in these practices. As I have shown sometimes the ascesis does involve a continued tradition of *budō*; this is however not always the case and ought not to be presumed to be.

I take as self-evident the deeply problematic nature of contemporary cultures of masculine violence towards which I have gestured. Perhaps highly accomplished martial artists *are* in fact paradoxically peaceable people but this paradox certainly does not apply to the cultures within which these exemplary individuals are often situated and within which the ability to inflict violence (*jutsu*) is itself taken to be laudatory and not the tendency also to be courteous or peaceable (*budō*). But even where *budō* remains central to a martial practice the sometimes problematic relationship between the martial arts and morality is not dissolved. A return to the example of classical *bushidō* illustrates this. In the adoption of Zen principles, *bushidō* did not take interest in the morality of an action itself, or in the consequences of the action, but rather maintained its focus on pure-mindedness. This was done for highly pragmatic reasons. 'Warrior Zen,' as the blending of Zen with *bushidō* has been called, rather underpinned the *bushidō* mentality in the sense that it encouraged the warrior to move resolutely ahead once he had made up his mind to act, whether that decision was rational or moral (Draeger 1996, 71). Fear led to hesitation and was a hindrance to mental composure and to swordsmanship. For the samurai who was prepared to die, there would be no feeling of uncertainty, fear, or hesitation. Such practices of the self largely dispense with awareness of ethical action in the world (Keenan 1989, 290). We may take note of the legendary practice of

cross-roads cutting, the testing of a sword's cutting power on commoners whom the samurai was not duty bound to protect, and the tendency for samurai to draw their swords and slay either each other or commoners for providing an insult to their honour (Blomberg 1995, 56). The actual extent to which the samurai were likely to 'dispatch hapless peasants on the road' has been called into question—Japanese historians have only managed to find a few cases of this actually occurring—and perhaps the argument to the moral collapse of samurai Zen cannot be fully sustained (Hurst 1990, 522; see too: McFarlane 1990, 407). However, the continued proximity of the *bushidō* ideal to self-evidently problematic behaviour ought not to be dismissed lightly. The 'widespread belief that the *bushidō* ideal is linked to the rise of Japanese imperialism, *kamikaze* attacks, suicide charges, and prisoner-of-war atrocities' is arguably justified even if not in its popular versions (Hurst 1990, 511). Even today *ēthos* that places the subject's honour above all else remain problematical.

The point is this: it is not possible to use the presence of a form of spirituality to separate martial arts at their 'best' from those at their 'worst.' I have argued that even at their most modern and most brutal martial arts are still forms of spiritual ascesis. Neither is separating martial arts which invoke 'traditional' *budō* in their spirituality sufficient to isolate the martial arts at their 'best' from those at their 'worst.' A critical evaluation of the spirituality itself is still needed and a practice is not *a priori* estimable simply by the fact that it can be interpreted in terms of an orientalist tradition of *budō*. Or, in the theoretical terms on which this chapter has relied, for Foucault ethics as the care of the self is not sufficient for morality. Foucault argues that the care of the self takes ethical and ontological priority over the care of others. The care of the self is the grounding condition for moral relations with others, it is the enabling condition for the development of the moral subject (Foucault 1994a, 287, 293). But morality, rules of conduct, or other normative moral systems, are not reducible to the care of the self.

It is often thought that a training in the martial arts is a training in virtue. The analysis of this chapter shows that this is not necessarily so. It has done so by avoiding the circularity of defining the 'true' or 'best' martial arts by their estimable moral or philosophical content while at the same time defining the philosophy of the martial arts by its proximity to martial training. The effect of this has been to demonstrate that while it may be the case that martial training is often conducted in parallel with moral training, and while it is often the case that the practice of martial arts really is a type of physically demanding play-acting and not in fact a training in effective techniques of violence, moral training and martial training are not necessarily connected. Moral systems are external to the martial arts, not intrinsic to them, and the philosophy of martial arts may have nothing to do with morality at all. I strongly agree that 'courtesy is essential to the martial arts at their best'; I am arguing however that 'essential' here needs to be read not as 'intrinsic' but rather in terms of the normative moral claim 'needed very badly.' Young finds the sources of martial courtesy in the three sources of the Japanese tradition, Shintō, Confucianism,

and Zen. But he also shows the historical contingency of the relationship between these traditions and the martial arts themselves. I have done so too. The further point of my chapter is that given the contingent relationship between martial arts and training in virtue, such moral training as is usually associated with the practice of martial arts may as well be sourced in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* or *On Liberty* and may in fact be better taught in the absence of a training in techniques of violence.

I began this chapter by briskly declaring that to use occidental university-based philosophy to analyse the martial arts would be to carelessly impose one discipline on the other. I conclude by suggesting that philosophy understood as systems of morality (whether occidental or oriental) are in fact external to the practice of martial arts, that their union is contingent, and that the imposition of one on the other is all the more urgent for this contingency.

## Notes

1 The same prejudice is evidenced in most academic works on the martial arts: see for example Keenan (1989), Mcfarlane (1990), and Bäck (2009).
2 Generally translated as 'in the shadow of leaves' or 'hidden in leaves.'
3 This aspect too is evident, though less so, in Takuan (2002, 59–60).
4 Young's explication of Japanese *budō* in terms of Greek *ēthos* evidences this (Young 2009, 205–207 of this volume; see too: Keenan 1989, 286).
5 Though I do not want to suggest that the *harm* caused in fighting—either in the ring or out of it—is not real I will in this chapter insist on qualifying the 'reality' of fighting.

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# PART II

# From the martial arts to philosophy

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# 5

# UNDERSTANDING QUALITY AND SUFFERING THROUGH THE MARTIAL ARTS

*Steve Bein*

Ever since John Stuart Mill opposed his mentor, Jeremy Bentham, in emphasizing the importance of quality when performing the hedonic calculus, there has been debate as to whether or not there is room for qualitative evaluation as well as quantitative evaluation in utilitarianism (Bentham 1830, 206; Mill 1993, 148–149; cf.: Barrow 1991; Holbrook 1988). However, the focus of this debate has been one-sided: the subject of debate has never been over varying levels of quality in experience writ large; rather, it has always been over varying levels of quality in *pleasure*. Even in studies dedicated solely to qualitative evaluation in utilitarianism, there is no discussion of whether or not experiences of suffering can vary in quality.[1]

The practice of certain martial arts—specifically, those that entail regular injury to their practitioners, which from here onward I shall refer to as high-contact martial arts—indicates that people do indeed prefer some injuries to other injuries based not on the severity of the injury but rather on its origin. (For example, as a kick-boxer, I strongly prefer a kick to the shin while sparring over accidentally banging my shin on the sharp corner of a coffee table, even if the two sensations are indistinguishable and even if their short-term and long-term effects are identical.) This phenomenon suggests that there are in fact qualitative differences in experiences of suffering as well as in experiences of satisfaction.

Martial artists are by no means the only people who prefer certain qualities of suffering over others. Some expectant mothers prefer to deliver without an epidural; traditional Hawaiian tattooing is still chosen despite the availability of less painful technologies and techniques; even if given a free cable car ticket to the summit of a mountain, the self-respecting mountaineer will choose the gruelling and potentially dangerous hike to the top instead. Nor should one confuse choosing between different *kinds* of suffering and different *degrees* of suffering. It is no qualitative evaluation at all if I prefer going to the dentist for

the minor suffering of regular checkups in order to avoid the major suffering of a root canal. Such 'lesser of two evils' cases are not of concern here.

Rather, my concern pertains to cases in which an individual prefers to undergo greater suffering than is necessary, on the condition that the greater suffering is superior in kind from the lesser suffering that was an available alternative. In such cases the martial artist is particularly enlightening, because high-contact martial arts directly bring avoidable suffering into the practitioner's life, and because unlike contact sports like football or basketball (which can be played well without making hard contact), the very point of the martial practice is hard contact.

## 1 Quality in satisfaction

I do not wish to address every turn in the debate over whether quality is a relevant concern for utilitarians, but a brief overview of that debate may prove instructive in developing an argument for why experiences of suffering can differ in quality. Stripped down to its most basic principle, utilitarianism holds that for an action to be morally right, it must maximise satisfaction and minimise suffering overall, and it must do so to a greater extent than any of the available alternatives. Notice that this definition of the right is a purely quantitative description; that is, it has only to do with the degree of satisfaction and suffering, with no mention of what kinds of satisfaction and suffering are available.

Some philosophers—Jeremy Bentham and Immanuel Kant being the most notable—hold that satisfaction cannot be experienced qualitatively, but only quantitatively.[2] According to Kant, quality is a matter of reason, not of the senses. In opposition to John Stuart Mill he says:

> A man can return unread an instructive book which he cannot again obtain, in order not to miss the hunt; he can go away in the middle of a fine speech, in order not to be late for a meal; he can leave an intellectual conversation which he otherwise enjoys, in order to take his place at the gambling table; he can even repulse a poor man whom it is usually a joy to aid, because he has only enough money in his pocket for a ticket to the theater. If the determination of the will rests on the feelings of agreeableness or disagreeableness which he expects from any cause, it is all the same to him through what kind of representation he is affected. The only thing he considers in making a choice is how great, how long-lasting, how easily obtained, and how often repeatable this agreeableness is.
>
> *Kant 1993, 23*

This passage speaks to some common moral intuitions, for example the presumption that stimulating intellectual conversation is indeed *morally* preferable to gambling. It was Mill's introduction of quality that gave utilitarianism the means to address these intuitions. However, it is not entirely

clear that including the capacity for qualitative differentiation is sufficient to deflect Kant's critique. Kant's position is that our representations are 'blind' with regard to origin; we can *only* experience them in degrees of quantity. In his words:

> however dissimilar the representations of the objects, be they proper to understanding or even to reason instead of to the senses, the feeling of pleasure [...] to the same. [...] No man asks, when he is concerned only with the agreeableness of life, whether the representations are from sense or understanding; he asks only how much and how great is the pleasure which they will afford him over the longest time.
>
> *Kant 1993, 23*

Any qualitative superiority we attribute to one source of 'agreeableness' over another is, according to Kant, an appeal to something other than utilitarian reasoning. If Mill wants to disagree with Bentham and assert poetry's superiority to push-pin (or, to use Kant's dichotomy, the pleasures of understanding to the pleasures of the senses), the objection holds that strictly speaking, Mill is not being a utilitarian when he does so.

But Kant's fundamental assumption here is problematic. First, the utilitarian's hedonic calculus is founded upon the ability to make at least one crucial distinction of quality: namely, the ability to prefer satisfaction to suffering. Suppose that you are forced to choose between experiencing X and experiencing Y, and that while you will not be told whether X or Y is pleasurable or painful, you are assured that one of the two is pleasurable, that the other is painful, and that the degree to which one is pleasurable is exactly the degree to which the other is painful. That is, X and Y are quantitatively equal: they are equally intense experiences, of equal duration, equally likely to transpire, equally likely to generate future experiences of a similar kind, and equal in any other sense that Bentham's seven measures or anyone else's quantifiable measures might register. The only piece of information you are not given is the most important: until you know whether X is pleasurable or painful, you have no basis at all for preferring X or Y.

Choosing between the two experiences requires knowledge of their properties (namely, the properties of being pleasurable or painful) and a qualitative judgement that one of these two properties is better than the other. Experience is not classified purely in the quantitative terms of duration, intensity, and so forth; it is also coded as being pleasurable or painful (or perhaps neither[3]). Far from being outside the bounds of utilitarianism, this qualitative distinction is the only way to make sense of the most basic premises of the utilitarian argument.

A second objection to Kant's assumption is that even in our experiences of satisfaction, it is not at all clear that we experience them 'blindly.' On the contrary, the very same experience may yield satisfaction in varying degrees based on solely the context. For jujutsu practitioners, successfully applying a

newly learned shoulder-lock in sparring is a thrill; apply the same lock a year later and the thrill is gone, for no other reason than that it is no longer 'new'; using the same lock to submit a more skillful opponent is more satisfying than submitting a neophyte with it, because of the relative rarity of such an accomplishment.

More than being an important addition to the way in which we approach the hedonic calculus, the quality of pleasure is arguably a necessary condition for being able to appreciate pleasure *as pleasure*. Without its qualitative aspect, quantitative assessments of pleasure may turn out to be pointless. Psychologist Daniel Goleman provides evidence for this claim in the case of Elliot, a man whose personality underwent a radical change after the removal of a brain tumor (Goleman 1995, 52–55). Elliot's rational abilities remained fully intact, but his emotional intelligence was drastically impaired. After the operation, 'Elliot was virtually oblivious to his feelings about what had happened to him... [he was] unable to assign *values* to differing possibilities. Every option was neutral' (Goleman 1995, 52–53). Elliot could rationally understand that people prefer satisfaction to suffering, but he could not prefer their preference himself. Qualitatively speaking, satisfaction and suffering were indistinct.

Karen J Warren observes that:

> on many versions of classical liberal moral theory (e.g. Kantian), Elliot-after-surgery seems to instantiate the (Kantian) ideal of the rational, impartial, detached observer! But Elliot's emotional intelligence was seriously debilitated: Without the ability to feel or to care about any of the options available to him, Elliot was incapable of moral reasoning.
>
> *Warren 2000, 110*

For utilitarianism, the capacity for moral reasoning is the capacity to make judgements based on utility. Elliot lacks this capacity, not because he cannot make quantitative assessments—indeed, he remains 'able to make every step in the calculus of a decision' (Goleman 1995, 53)—but because he is incapable of preferring utility over disutility. Something fundamentally qualitative is missing from his analysis.

The difference between satisfaction and suffering is surely qualitative, not quantitative in nature, but even for those of us with perfectly functional brains, it is surprisingly difficult to pin down exactly what that qualitative distinction might be. According to Ronald Melzack, a specialist on pain, coming up with a universal definition of pain is surprisingly difficult. According to Melzack, 'pain is such a common experience that we rarely pause to define it in ordinary conversation. Yet no one who has worked on the problem of pain has ever been able to give it a definition which is satisfactory to all of his colleagues' (Melzack 1973b, 11).

A universal definition of pain is elusive because while pain is *generally* something we choose to avoid, our preferences in this matter are in no way universal. There is not even universal consensus on the very aspiration to lead

a life of minimal suffering. As Nietzsche famously quipped, 'Mankind does not strive for happiness; only the Englishman does that' (Nietzsche 1990, 33). A pervasive theme throughout Nietzsche's work is the propensity for pain and adversity to foster greater strength, resiliency, and independence. One should not be surprised to find high-contact martial artists who share this Nietzschean sentiment.[4] This value is elevated even higher in the Buddhist monastic tradition, which has long held suffering to have salvific power (Bein 2013, 53–54).[5]

To say pleasure is better than pain is to say pleasure is qualitatively superior to pain, in the same way that saying poetry is better than push-pin is saying poetry is qualitatively superior to push-pin. If an important moral distinction between pain and pleasure is qualitative, it becomes clear why Elliot was incapable of moral reasoning. Preferences are made based in part on qualitative distinctions, and Elliot-after-surgery lacks the capacity for qualitative evaluation and for making preferences; without these capacities, the relative quantities of utility and disutility become utterly meaningless.

## 2 Quality in suffering

If Warren and Goleman are right, it follows that the ability to evaluate quality is a necessary feature of utilitarian moral reasoning. If my earlier claim was correct, the quality of our experience is often tied up in the context in which it is experienced. And this has everything to do with the kick-boxer's preference to be kicked in the shin rather than accidentally bumping into the corner of the coffee table. In both cases the pain is easily preventable: stop kick-boxing; buy a round coffee table. Yet there are those of us who have traded in our sharp-cornered coffee tables but have not yet retired from kick-boxing. Why?

It will be insufficient to claim that kick-boxing is not harmful on balance—that is, that whatever the pains of kick-boxing may be, the rewards are greater. First, for the great majority of kick-boxers the rewards do *not* outweigh the costs; that is why the majority of those who start the training choose to quit after only a few days or weeks. Second—and more importantly for a discussion about the quality of suffering—cases in which benefits outweigh costs are philosophically uninteresting for utilitarians, and indeed for all consequentialists: it is *obvious* that any activity whose overall benefits outweigh the overall costs is a good activity.

I am concerned with cases in which people seem to prefer a greater amount of disutility to a lesser amount, as seen not only with martial artists but also, for example, with mountaineers. By all accounts, pleasure in mountaineering seems to be inversely proportional to altitude. According to this formula, the most miserable place on Earth is the summit of Everest, a point that few who have been there would take issue with. The higher one climbs a mountain, the colder it gets, the thinner the air becomes, the more susceptible one becomes to altitude-induced sickness and edema, and so on. Yet mountaineers are often preoccupied with climbing ever-higher peaks, and these days at faster and

faster speeds. The desire seems to be to increase the discomfort, to increase the risks—in short, to stray further and further from maximal utility. So why are there any high-altitude mountaineers?

For some, it is the adrenaline high that comes with running risks, a rush that becomes more intense the greater the risks become. But surely there are easier ways to do this. Instead of climbing a 20,000-foot peak, why not climb a 10,000-foot peak with no safety gear whatsoever? That would increase the risks by orders of magnitude, but rational mountaineers do not choose such a course.

A wiser motivation might be the satisfaction that accompanies testing the limits of one's abilities. This also motivates the martial artist, especially when, for instance, choosing to spar with a superior opponent. This choice almost assuredly involves some degree of disutility: we do not exceed our limitations without some trepidation. Why would rational agents consistently choose this path?

Let us take it as given that when climbers choose to head for the mountains, or when martial artists choose to spar more skillful opponents, they could also have chosen at least one alternative course of action with equal prospects for delivering comparable amounts of positive utility, that this utility is qualitatively equal as well, and that this alternative course offers lower risk of disutility. To offer a concrete example, I enjoy wildlife photography as well as mountaineering and martial arts, and capturing good images of birds is notoriously difficult. It is every bit as technically challenging as completing a tricky pitch of climbing or applying a new submission in my *jujutsu* class. If it is not as physically taxing, it poses intellectual and artistic challenges of its own, and I esteem these equally. With all three activities, I can push myself to become a better practitioner. The major difference is that I have never suffered any injury in photographing birds. And most importantly for the present discussion, there has never been a day of climbing or martial training for me when I could not have picked up my camera instead and gone in search of the perfect photo.

Given this sort of alternative—one that provides equal potential for utility with lesser risk of disutility—why has anyone ever achieved a black belt in a high-contact martial art? Why has anyone ever risked life and limb to scale a mountain?

The answer to this cannot be that by pushing her limits in the dojo or in the mountains, the climber makes herself a better person and enjoys greater utility in the long run; this possibility was eliminated by hypothesis. As I see it, the reason a mountaineer or a martial artist risks all the suffering entailed in their chosen pastimes is that this suffering is of a different and better *kind* than the alternative forms of suffering. In other words, this suffering is qualitatively superior.

There is a disutility involved in leading a life of minimised risk—the risk of becoming sedentary—and the mountaineer and the high-contact martial artist are both willing to accept fairly high risks to avoid this kind of disutility. The same is true of the professional athlete, the extreme sports enthusiast, the

photographer of war zones instead of docile wildlife. For such people, even though the suffering involved in their chosen activities is often acute, and very likely greater in quantity than the suffering inherent in leading a less active life, the suffering attached to the latter is of such low quality that it is to be avoided even at the cost of greater amounts of high-quality suffering.

The inverse is true when comparing low and high-quality satisfaction. Mill was the first to hold that a small amount of high-quality pleasure is to be preferred over large amounts of low-quality pleasure (Mill 1993). Only by such an appeal is poetry deemed superior to push-pin. On similar grounds I suggest that the martial artist is justified in preferring a week of aches and pains to a week of boredom and restlessness in front of the television. There is a qualitative difference between the two types of discomfort.

The Greeks recognised high-quality suffering in their word *agōnia*, from which the English word 'agony' is derived. *Agōnia* implies a struggle or contest, and in fact the same word was used to describe gymnastic exercises.[6] The idea behind *agōnia* is that certain kinds of satisfaction can be attained only through struggle. This is not a suffering that is undergone in order to realise a later pleasure; in *agōnia* the satisfaction is inextricable from the suffering. Take as a counterexample an individual retirement account. Money is deducted from every paycheck to be deposited into the IRA, a minor form of suffering undergone in the present in order to realise a greater satisfaction in the future. Suppose that through some technological sleight-of-hand I found that I could deposit money into my account without having it deducted from my paycheck. The money isn't stolen from anyone; it just appears in my IRA as if by magic. Would I not be a fool to refuse?

However, in the case of those who appreciate *agōnia* for what it is, any comparable offer must be immediately rejected. The great mountaineer Reinhold Messner famously cursed new technological developments in climbing aids as 'the murder of the impossible.' To make climbing easier is to destroy what makes climbing worthwhile. Similarly, in mixed martial arts competition some strikes (e.g. rabbit punches) are ruled illegal because they are potentially life-threatening, while others (e.g. eye gouges, groin strikes) are illegal because they are simply too effective. The sport would be boring if they were allowed. Fighters and fans alike prefer to see victory without anyone resorting to 'cheap shots.'

Given the choice between a cable car to the summit and a long, gruelling hike, the mountaineer can only start walking; to choose the cable car is to give up mountaineering, at least for the day. Given the choice between honest competition in which victory is uncertain and a competition in which the referee has been bribed to rule against the other fighter, the martial artist who values his art must choose honest competition. For that matter, given the choice between honest competition with a rank beginner and honest competition with an opponent of equal belt rank, the best fighters choose the more skillful opponent. Some professionals even choose to fight in heavier weight classes because they are too dominant among fighters of their own size.

It is not that easy victory is without reward; countless fighters have won fat purses for easy victories. The point is that for high-contact martial artists, the point of the art is the *agōnia*.

## 3 Understanding quality in suffering

Thus far I have argued, with the support of some psychologists' findings (Melzack 1973a; 1973b; Goleman 1995) that it is by attaching values to our hedonic experiences that we can identify some as satisfactory and others as suffering. I have also argued that the quality of our hedonic experience inheres in the context in which we experience it and the meaning of the value we attach to it. (This is in keeping with Mill's 'competent judge' solution for differentiating levels of quality in satisfaction, because it serves to explain part of the basis on which the competent judge makes qualitative evaluations.) My position also implies that qualitative differences must be assigned to experiences of suffering as well as those of satisfaction, and that both of these are necessary for sound utilitarian reasoning.

However, the question of how to identify or establish differences in the quality of disutility is not much clearer than it was at the outset. If I am right in holding that the quality of suffering lies in the meaning we attach to it when we evaluate it as suffering, it still needs to be shown how one form of suffering comes to be deemed superior to another in quality.

There are at least two lines we might draw in separating higher and lower qualities of suffering: self-causation versus other-causation and voluntary involvement versus involuntary involvement. To clarify, consider four mechanisms of injury, all resulting in identical disutility—in these cases, a mildly hyper-extended shoulder:

1 A slip on the ice, in which no one else is at fault.
2 A rear-end automobile collision in which the other driver is clearly at fault.
3 A fall during a risky move in rock climbing.
4 An opponent's legal but excessively forceful shoulder-lock in a *jujutsu* competition.

In cases 1 and 3 only the injured person can be held responsible, while in cases 2 and 4 another party is primarily responsible for the injury. Cases 1 and 2 result in injury due to involuntary involvement in an accident, while in cases 3 and 4 the injured party knowingly participated in an inherently risky activity.

I think the difference between these two contrast classes is quite important when considering qualitative assessments of pain, for the two classes point to the issues of accountability and acceptance. I do not wish to classify any one of the four possible origins of suffering as universally qualitatively superior to another. (Qualitative assessments are not always universalisable.) However, it seems to me that for many people, when pain is caused through one's voluntary participation in a risky activity (such as in cases 3 and 4), the pain that one

brings upon oneself is 'better' (perhaps because one 'owns' the pain, so to speak). If the suffering is accidental (as in cases 1 and 2), I think many people would feel the 'better' pain is the one elicited by another person. Whether one feels embarrassed for having injured oneself is inconsequential; for purposes of the thought experiment, we may suppose that any embarrassment suffered from slipping on the ice equals the amount of emotional disutility suffered in the case of the car accident (e.g. anger at the other driver). What matters more, I think, is the meaning we attach to the injury.

There is no question that to attach certain meanings to a given form of suffering is to alter one's experience of the suffering itself. Ronald Melzack recounts the surprising findings of a combat doctor in World War II, who was astonished to find that among severely wounded soldiers taken into field hospitals, only one out of three requested morphine for pain relief. When the physician returned to his clinical practice after the war, he noted that among civilians who suffered similar injuries and had to undergo similar procedures, four out of five pleaded for morphine due to extreme pain. It was not the case that the wounded soldiers he treated were in a state of shock, nor that they could not feel pain; they complained as much as anyone else when a doctor or nurse was clumsy with an injection. The difference between the two groups, this physician concluded, was that for the soldiers the injury meant they were going home, while for the civilians the injury was an unmitigated disaster (Melzack 1973b, 29–30).

Psychologists also help clients cope with serious injuries with what Melzack calls the 'imaginative transformation of context': 'The patient is trained to acknowledge pain but to transform the setting or context. For example, a patient with a sprained arm may picture himself as a fighter pilot who has been shot in the arm while being chased by an enemy plane' (Melzack 1973a, 347). By imaginatively transforming the context of the pain, the patient transmutes the meaning associated with it into a more appealing form.

Finally, Melzack cites religious rituals in which treatment that would acontextually be treated as torturous is transformed by the meaning the participant attaches to it. One of his more graphic examples is the Sun Dance 'self-torture' ceremony of a North American Plains Indian band, in which the initiate has skewers thrust through the skin of his chest and back. These are then attached to anchored poles, and the initiate must tear out the skewers in a wild, flailing dance (Melzack 1973b, 26–27). Melzack also cites a religious ritual in India in which a 'celebrant' is pierced with metal hooks, and is then suspended by them and swung about on the end of a pole (Melzack 1973b, 22–24). In both ceremonies the participant shows no pain whatsoever; on the contrary, the Indian celebrant 'appears to be in a state of "exaltation"' (Melzack 1973b, 24).

We must assume that the skewers and hooks hurt when shoved through the flesh—that is, that all the neurological connections are intact and fully functional. (If we do not assume this, then not only are such rituals philosophically and psychologically uninteresting, but it is hard to explain

how they ever came to be regarded as significant.) It is because being skewered or hooked is invested with ritual significance that the hurting is not translated into suffering.

In short, we have experiences and we have predispositions toward those experiences. These correlate as sound corresponds to volume: it is hard to imagine having one without having the other. Similarly, experiences of both satisfaction and suffering come to us in differing levels of quantity and quality. Every quantum of satisfaction or suffering has its respective quality, and vice versa: again, it is hard to imagine how one could exist without the other. It behooves the utilitarian to take the quality of suffering into account, not only because it necessarily exists if any suffering exists but also because understanding the quality of suffering helps explain some of our decisions and moral preferences. The utilitarian analysis is improved by this greater understanding.

## 4 Conclusion

Ever since John Stuart Mill published *Utilitarianism*, utilitarians have had an argument supporting the preference of a lesser amount of high-quality pleasure to a greater amount of low-quality pleasure. The effort required to appreciate poetry is worthwhile because of this prioritisation; without taking differing levels of quality into account, all of our greatest poets might just as well have spent their time playing tic-tac-toe (or push-pin, as Bentham would have had it). If I am right, there is an inverted but correlative preference in the case of disutility: we may prefer—and in some cases we *should* prefer—greater amounts of high-quality suffering to lesser amounts of low-quality suffering.

For utilitarianism this may come as a shock to the system, and indeed this may be the reason utilitarians have not given serious thought thus far to qualitative evaluations of pain as well as pleasure: if we admit higher and lower qualities of pain, then it follows that there may be circumstances in which the morally preferable choice is *not* the choice that minimises overall suffering. Given the choice between a greater amount of high-quality *agōnia* and a lesser amount of low-quality boredom, the martial artist is not wrong to choose the *agōnia*. That is to say, the martial artist is not irrational, not a faulty utility-maximiser, and—most importantly—not immoral for practicing high-contact martial arts. Neither is it immoral to climb mountains or photograph notoriously elusive birds. The case I have made here gives utilitarianism the equipment to take *agōnia* into account.

This may seem *prima facie* to be a philosophically insignificant point, but its ramifications are far-reaching. For instance, it can make sense of why we choose to remain faithful in emotionally complex relationships when we have the option to seek purely sexual relationships with minimal emotional commitment. Of course there are easy, purely quantitative justifications for such relationships, but less easy are cases in which one stays at a dying lover's bedside despite the crushing emotional turmoil of end-of-life care. It is not

sufficient to say the guilt one would feel by abandoning a dying lover outweighs the horror one feels at watching one's lover slip away, for this does not align with moral psychology. When we love, we stay because we prefer to stay, not because we are avoiding guilt.

It might also be argued that love is not utility maximising, and that when we suffer for love we do so out of love, not out of any utilitarian sense of moral duty. But there is another utilitarian explanation for the common preference for emotionally invested relationships over purely sexual relationships: namely, that the avoidable disutility one experiences by entering into an emotionally intimate relationship is preferable by its nature—that is, qualitatively—to the lesser disutility one experiences by having one's physical needs met while remaining emotionally aloof.

The most radical consequence of the position I have defended here is that it challenges the utilitarian's very definition of what is morally right. It cannot be the case that what is right is whatever maximises overall satisfaction and minimises overall suffering *and* that sometimes it is right *not* to minimise overall suffering, but rather to allow unnecessary suffering provided that it is of sufficiently high quality. But by no means does this prove that utilitarianism is itself a faulty theory. Rather, it reveals a need to reframe what it means to maximise overall satisfaction and minimise overall suffering. Millian utilitarianism contends that overall satisfaction is in fact maximised if we sometimes maximise high-quality satisfaction even at the expense of forgoing a greater quantity of low-quality satisfaction. To this, I have argued, we must add the possibility that overall suffering is in fact minimised even if we sometimes allow for a greater degree of high-quality suffering when we could have chosen a smaller quantity of low-quality suffering instead.

## Notes

1 Robin Barrow's book *Utilitarianism: a contemporary statement*, for example, has a chapter dedicated to 'Quantity or Quality of Happiness?' but not one reference to the quality of suffering. Daniel Holbrook's *Qualitative utilitarianism* is, as the title suggests, an extended treatment of qualitative differentiations in utilitarianism, yet once again only differentiations in the quality of satisfaction are considered; suffering is entirely overlooked.

2 Robin Barrow concurs with the Kantian analysis, calling quality not a 'property of things' but rather a 'supervenient concept' (Barrow 1991, 135).

3 This trivalent qualitative judgement follows the Buddhist analysis of the human capacity of *vedanā*, or 'sensation': the means of identifying sense data as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral (Rahula 1974; Reat 1990; Williams 1998).

4 Michael Monahan offers 'Nietzschean reflections on the martial arts' in Monahan, 'The Practice of Self-Overcoming: Reflections on the Martial Arts' (2007).

5 The Buddhist monastic tradition is hardly the only one to endorse extreme asceticism, but it is worth noting that not all monks who engaged in such practices did so for their salvific promise. Perhaps the most well known example, the Roman Catholic Flagellants, did *not* practice self-flagellation as a means to gain spiritual insight; for them it was an appeal to be spared from eternal damnation—a straightforward choice of the lesser of two evils (Cohn 1970, 127).

6 Heather Reid draws the connection between the Greek notion of *agōnia* and the Asian martial arts (Reid 2010). Shinobu Abe makes that connection not solely to martial arts but to sport in general; he argues that the 'ultimate goal' in Japanese sport is not entertainment or bodily training, but rather 'to foster a manly spirit' (Abe 1986, 46). Jean Taisen Deshimaru and Kazuhiko Yamashita maintain a similar position (Deshimaru 1982, 23; Yamashita 1986, 40–42). Criticisms of the linkage between sport and masculinity abound; for a few representative samples, see Bendelow (1993), Burstyn (1999), Connell (2002), Whitehead (2002), Ervo and Johansson (2003), Spencer (2011).

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# 6

# IS PROPRIOCEPTIVE ART POSSIBLE?

*Markus Schrenk*

## Outline

I argue for the possibility of a proprioceptive art in addition to, for example, visual or auditory arts, where aspects of some martial arts will serve as examples of that art form.

My argument is inspired by a thought attributed to American dance pioneer Ted Shawn: 'Dance is the only art wherein we ourselves are the stuff in which it is made.'

In a first step, I point out that in some practices of martial arts (in the chapter I will introduce *hyongs* and *katas*), we are, too, the stuff these performances are made of.

Second, I show that we, as martial arts practitioners, are not in the first place visual or auditorial observers (as common in painting or music or ballet) but introspective, proprioceptive perceivers of our bodies and their movements. (As a corollary we get that we are, in such a case, necessarily our exclusive audience.)

In a third crucial step, I show that the martial arts practices referred to, *hyongs* and *katas*, and especially the proprioceptive aspects thereof, can indeed count as art.

Thus, proprioceptive art is possible because some practices of some martial arts are actual existing examples of that art form.

The chapter is organised in the following way. The first section deals with a couple of obvious objections and adds some caveats. The second section offers an explication of what I shall mean by *art*. Section 3 promotes the often neglected modality of proprioception and section 4 provides us with more detailed definitions of proprioception/interoception. While the previous sections serve as the necessary preliminaries, the part to follow, five, unfolds the actual argument for a proprioceptive art form, starting with Shawn's quote

as mentioned in the outline. It introduces the aspects of martial arts, namely *hyongs*, *katas*, etc., that fulfil many of the roles of art as listed in section 2. In the final, sixth, section the arguments will be wrapped up. (There's also a brief addendum on Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory and how it might relate to the martial arts.)[1]

## 1 Caveats

(i) 'Art'—at least in most of its meanings within the Western history of art and aesthetic theories—is most certainly not the appropriate translation for the word *Dō* as it appears, for example, in 'Taekwon- *Dō*' or 'Karate- *Dō*.' Rather, the Japanese *Dō* or Chinese *Dao/Tao* is more adequately, if still not entirely correctly, translated as the path or way of self-cultivation on which a pupil is usually accompanied by an authoritative master who teaches codified practices with normative force and supposed universal validity.[2]

Clearly, then, the so called 'martial arts' are not art (as in 'fine arts') just because they bear that name. The name does not even vaguely indicate that they might truly fall under that concept.

(ii) '... is art' is often meant to be a quality certificate: art is appreciated as a high cultural good and, thus, the label 'art' is given, and often wrongly, as a quality measure. Here, no such value statement is implied when arguing for the art-character of martial arts. There's lots of bad art and there are many things in life that are highly valuable but clearly not artistic.[3]

(iii) Similarly, but to the opposite effect, the pejorative connotations of 'martial' (from Mars, the Roman god of warfare) are: brutality, destruction, harm, and murder. Again, as in (i) and (ii), *nomen non est omen*.

(iv) Some martial arts are embedded in belief systems and religious practices such as Daoism, Confucianism, Hinduism, or Buddhism. For reasons of space I will, by and large, have to ignore the details of these connections [but see Allen (2013) who examines this 'dual cultivation of the spiritual and the martial' (242)].

(v) I have to restrict myself in all considerations to Eastern martial arts, like Karate, Taekwon-Do, Kung-Fu, etc. It is from these arts that my sample cases come. (Medieval) European martial arts like, for example, sword fight, joust, or wrestling will be left out.

(vi) The opposite is true for the concept of *art* for which Western traditions will be my reference point. I turn to that concept now.

## 2 What is art?

Within the Western tradition of art, aesthetics, and art theory, there is, infamously, no universally accepted definition of what art is. No necessary and sufficient conditions an entity has to fulfil to count as a work of art seem

entirely acceptable. (Gettier cases in epistemology are a finger exercise compared to the difficulties we face in case of a definition for art.)

Given the fact that there is no one strict definition of art that captures what our intuition (or that of other peoples or times, trans-historically and trans-culturally) subsumes under that concept, we might want to continue in a Wittgensteinian spirit: while artworks form a set of too diverse items as to be subsumed under necessary and sufficient conditions they nonetheless bear some *family resemblance* to each other. The locus classicus for such an approach is Morris Weitz's paper 'The Role of Theory in Aesthetics':

> The problem of the nature of art is like that of the nature of games, at least in these respects: If we actually look and see what it is that we call 'art,' we will also find no common properties—only strands of similarities. Knowing what art is is not apprehending some manifest or latent essence but being able to recognize, describe, and explain those things we call 'art' in virtue of these similarities.
>
> *Weitz 1956, 31*

I adopt the family resemblance theory of art as my reference point and I will explore my central thesis in terms of that theory.[4]

For that purpose, I will put forward a list of respects in which works of art family-resemble each other. Later, I will take this collection of properties and make credible that (some aspects of some) martial arts should count as a proprioceptive art because they match a substantial number of attributes on this resemblance list.

In the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on *The Definition of Art*, Thomas Adajian collects such a set of properties. I supplement the list Adajian initially offers by further aspects he mentions later in his article and also by my own considerations.[5] Here, then, is the list of attributes...

> no one of which is a necessary condition for being a work of art, but which are jointly sufficient for being a work of art, and which is such that at least one proper subset thereof is sufficient for being a work of art.
>
> *Adajian 2008*

Artworks

- (I) possess positive, usually perceptual, aesthetic properties: typically artworks are arrangements that are intended to have the capacity to afford experiences of aesthetic character (cf. Beardsley 1982, 299), for example to invoke joy and pleasure;
- (II) are expressive of emotion;[6]
- (III) lack any practical use;
- (IV) are potentially meaningful, i.e., have the capacity to convey complex by representational, mimetic, expressive, and formal properties;
- (V) are formally complex and coherent;

(VI) are artefacts or performances which are the product of a high degree of skill and expertise;
(VII) sometimes have non-aesthetic, ceremonial or religious or propagandistic functions;
(VIII) are intellectually challenging;
(IX) exhibit an individual point of view;
(X) are original;
(XI) are the product of an intention to make a work of art;
(XII) belong to an established artistic form;
(XIII) are socially mediated.

I wish to add two more entries. They are less self-explanatory and will be explicated below. Artworks might:

(XIV) be objects sanctioned by art schools;
(XV) bear resemblance to prototypes.

These two entries refer to theories of art that originally compete with the family resemblance approach. The latter, prototype theories of art, cf. (XV), focus not, or not initially, on lists of characteristic aspects in which artworks should resemble each other. Rather, they suggest that paradigm cases are picked out which definitely count as works of art ('If not this, nothing is art!'). Subsequently, all else is identifiable as a work of art if and only if it resembles these exemplars.[7] As I said, I will adopt the family resemblance theory for my purposes but I will occasionally refer to paradigm cases of art to point out that proprioceptive artworks share features of those prototypes. This is my reason to add entry (XV).

Conventionalist theories of art, cf. (XIV), deny that intrinsic features of an entity suffice (or even matter at all) to decide whether it counts as art. Rather, art is, in the *institutionalist conventionalist* theory, whatever the academy, museums, and artists get away with. Thus, '...is art' becomes an extrinsic, relational, sociological property (cf. Danto 1981). *Historical conventionalism*, which focuses more on diachronic aspects rather than the synchronic sociological ones just mentioned, holds that artworks stand 'in an art-historical relation to some set of earlier artworks' (Adajian 2008).

Conventionalisms, just as prototype theory, are typically not meant to supplement family resemblance theories but rather to oppose them. Still, I assimilate institutionalism into family resemblance theories in that I list 'being an object sanctioned by art schools' as further entry (XIV).

I will show in section 5, especially 5.3, how the idea of a proprioceptive art (martial arts being my test case) fulfil many aspects of the supplemented family resemblance list.

Before I do that, I will first focus on the sense modalities art is usually appreciated with and I will introduce what is meant by proprioception.

## 3 Art for the sake of which senses?

Of all human senses only the five outer senses—sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch—get frequently mentioned. Often omitted are interoceptive modalities like proprioception (kinesthetic sense), thermoception (temperature), nociception (pain).

Within the arts, an even smaller subset—hearing and sight—takes a clear priority. We are used to seeing paintings, photography, sculpture, or architecture, and hearing music or poetry. A mix of both seeing and hearing is realised in opera, theatre, and film.

Rarely, we are lucky enough to also touch the behind of a David or Venus cast or walk through and lean against the walls of some grand edifice. Yet, touch is at best secondary[8] and hardly ever intended.[9] Even less common are smell or taste. While some might be tempted to *metaphorically* call a chef an 'artist' for her delicious food, most would still insist that cooking is, *literally speaking*, 'only' a craft but not an art. There were attempts at smelling artworks: Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin (1872–1915) created scent compositions to accompany his synaesthetic *gesamtkunstwerk*,[10] yet, arguably, this 'art form' never really kicked off. Proprioception (examples, as described in more detail in the next section, are the felt orientation of our limbs in space, muscle tensions, etc.) are not heard of as modalities for art appreciation.

There are, of course, practical reasons for our preference of sound and vision: the facility of reproduction and dissemination of the artworks, the possibility to enjoy the artworks at a distance, our relative excellence in the visual and auditorial faculties (as, for example, compared to our poor sense of smell), our acquired ability to converse with relative ease about the respective phenomena (as opposed to taste where almost only wine connoisseurs have gained the necessary vocabulary and expertise), etc.

There are also *prima facie* reasons against the proprioceptive senses: their intersubjective variance, their instability and irregularity. Yet, the appearance of intersubjective variance etc. is due to the fact that we tend to apply the wrong standards of comparison: it is true, in the same physical surroundings (an old masters exhibition, say) most of us have comparatively similar visual and auditory experiences (similar enough to talk about the canvases) while our proprioceptions might, in these same surroundings, *inter*subjectively vary and even change *intra*subjectively from moment to moment. Yet, the right comparison is not bodies in the same outer physical surroundings (a museum, say) but bodies engaging in the same relevant proprioceptive art forms (let dance be an example for the time being; examples such as *kata* and *hyong* will be given later). Since we share a similar physique we can expect the proprioceptions to be sufficiently similar in everyone when engaging in the appropriate bodily moves and postures.[11]

There are, admittedly, the mentioned practical reasons for which the outer senses have been more popular and the inner senses have been neglected but there are no compelling *in-principle* reasons why the inner senses cannot serve as a conduit for artistic appreciation.

Vision, hearing, etc. and proprioception/interoception all constitute their own sense classes[12] and artworks could, in principle, be equally well made of compositions of proprioceptive sensations as of structures of visual or auditory phenomena. Or so I wish to claim in this chapter: there is the possibility for proprioceptive art forms.[13]

To make a good case for proprioceptive art I turn to what proprioception exactly is.

## 4 Interoception, proprioception

Proprioception—from Latin *proprius*, one's own, and (*re*)*ception*—is the often (but by no means always) subconscious perception of stimuli within the body (including one's tendons, joints, muscles, skin) relating to spatial orientation, i.e., one's own position in space relative to Earth's centre; equilibrium;[14] one's movements, including acceleration (kinesthesioception); whether the body is moving with the required effort; one's posture, internal conditions such as muscle tension, whether muscles are stretched or loose, etc.

Proprioception provides the parietal cortex of the brain with the necessary information it needs for bodily actions, the (re-)orientation of limbs and navigation. Proprioception is a feedback mechanism. That is, information about body moves is returned to the brain and updated during body movement, so that subsequent adjustments can, when necessary, be made. Proprioceptions, when permanently present (for example, the pressure of a chair we are sitting on), might be unnoticed because humans adapt to continuously present stimuli. This is known as habituation. Yet, the impairment of proprioceptive faculties results in deep deficits in our overall perception and action.

Often a sense of temperature (thermoception), of pain (nociception), even of time, is also mentioned, and, too, the awareness of our energy and stress levels, our state of well-being and our moods. One might want to speak more generally of interoceptions of which the latter perceptions and the above mentioned proprioceptions are two subsets. For more detailed information on proprioception see, for example, the entry *Proprioception* in the *Encyclopedia of Neuroscience* (in bibliography as Taylor 2009, 1143–1149).

The following core section is dedicated to the idea of a proprioceptive art. It will be argued that martial arts *as proprioceptive arts* fulfil sufficiently many entries of the supplemented family resemblance list of section 2.

## 5 Martial arts as proprioceptive arts

### *The stuff of which the art is made*

In the outline of this chapter I said that Ted Shawn's claim—'Dance is the only art wherein we ourselves are the stuff in which it is made'—is also true of the martial arts.[15] Actually, in the sense of the claim Shawn intended—namely that dance is a *visual art* in which some of us are its material—many other

performance arts, including happenings,[16] and also, for example, tattooing art fall under the 'we are the stuff' label.

Yet, the disproved exclusivity of dance is not my issue here. Also, I will not argue that the martial arts can be listed amongst the *visual* arts where an audience watches a beautifully choreographed sequence of dance moves or, in our case, successions of punches and kicks. Probably martial arts can be visual art for much the same reasons I will give for my own goal but, again, that's not my concern here. Rather, I will argue that proprioception can be artistic and that some martial arts might be regarded as such proprioceptive arts.

A first step in this direction has been taken already: I have advertised the in principle possibility of proprioception being one of the modalities with which art may be perceived. Agreed, proprioception is a faculty which is not only underdeveloped in ordinary life: in art it is unheard of. And, yet, I will try to show now that some aspects of the martial arts can be seen as just that: a proprioceptive art form.

## *5.1* Hyongs*, and* katas*, and other prearranged sequences of martial arts techniques*

A martial artist might prove her accomplishments by breaking wooden boards or even bricks and stones with the bare power of her fists and the speed of her feet. Yet, it would be hard to argue that this, albeit amazing, skill can be seen as art (in a sense the Western culture would accept).

Yet, many martial arts consist of a variety of practices amongst which the just-mentioned power tests are only one. They also often comprise sparring, self-defence, and, crucial for my purposes, formal sets of fighting techniques, like *hyong* or *poomse* (Korean), *katas* (Japanese), or *aka* (Burmese). (Henceforth, I will, for better readability, speak of only *hyongs* and/or *katas* although all such forms of different martial arts are meant.)

These systematised routines are sequences or patterns of defensive behaviour, attacking techniques, steps and turnings, conducted in a strict order of movements while attempting to maintain perfect posture. These forms are practiced at various levels of mastery and get more and more elaborate and demanding the more experienced the martial artist becomes. Often, performances of *hyongs*, *katas*, etc. are key elements of grading ceremonies (e.g., to gain a blue belt in Taekwon-Do[17] one has to master the seventh, *T'oi-Gye*, of the *hyongs*). Creative forms of *hyongs* and *katas* are possible although the established systematic, prearranged sequences dominate.

While the main objective of *katas* and *hyongs* is, often, to try out different techniques against virtual opponents in a safe environment which could ultimately be used to defeat a real opponent, this goal can become subordinate. *Hyongs* and *katas* can and are seen by many practitioners as performances in their own right.

It is also important to mention that many of these venerable forms have a second semantic level next to their origin in combat. Their movements are not

only defences and attacks, there's also often a layer of meaning that transcends the mere physical. In *katas*, for example, some numbers of moves (e.g. '108'), have links to Buddhist spirituality[18] and the movements of many *hyongs* quite explicitly designate spiritual concepts or virtues (cf. Choi 1994, 351ff.; Kwon 1992, 75–78):

- In *Cheon-Ji hyong*, low forearm blocks in all four directions point towards earth and four inner forearm middle blocks designate heaven (*Cheon-Ji* meaning heaven and earth).
- The cross shaped diagram the practitioner walks while performing the blocks and also the punches represents the four elements fire, water, air and earth. A Yin–Yang interpretation of *Cheon-Ji hyong* suggests itself.
- In both *Toi-Gye* and *Yul-Gok hyong* their movement diagram represents the calligraphic character 'scholar.'
- *Po Eun hyong*'s pattern is a straight line which designates *Jeong Mongju*'s unsubduable loyalty to king and country (*Po Eun* being the pseudonym of *Jeong Mongju* who was a distinguished scholar of neo-Confucianism), etc.

## *5.2* Hyongs *and* katas *as proprioceptive art form*

While a well conducted performance of a *hyong* or *kata* is a pleasure to watch it is an even greater joy to perform it oneself. This is not so much because one sees but, rather, because one feels what one does.[19] Sometimes *hyongs* are a blindfolded exercise where the practitioner has to rely entirely on proprioception. Hearing the sounds of one's kicks and punches might be of some additional help, yet, most and crucial sensual input is given via proprioceptions and, while conducting a *hyong*, they are rich indeed: accelerations, angles, forces, overall speed, rhythm, effort, overcome resistance, strain, tension, stretch, pressure, gravity are all experienced during such a performance.

If you 'play' your body well, like a musician plays a sonata on her instrument, you have 'harmonious' proprioceptions. Many factors, including precision, speed, the appropriate kinetics and mental and physical fortitude have to be in proper control: not any performance will lead to something aesthetic and it takes the practitioner a long stony way under the austere guidance of their master to learn the right movements with the correct intrinsic dynamics. Yet, again, just as a violinist hears when his performance is right the martial artist will, with enough practice, herself feel when her movements are correct. As with sonatas, it is then that proprioceptive pleasure is greatest.

## *5.3 Art checklist for the proprioceptive art form* hyong *and* kata

A few hints have been given already why *hyong* and *katas* could count as performances of a proprioceptive art form: conducting such forms in established correct ways brings rich proprioceptive experiences with it which are, when the *kata*/*hyong* is performed well, felt with intense aesthetic pleasure.

Yet, aesthetic joy alone makes no art and, sometimes, art is everything but pleasurable. A defence of martial arts as proprioceptive arts demands further arguments. They can be given in a straightforward way: we need only go through the family resemblance list as introduced in section 2. If at least some (still better: a great number) of respects can be attributed to the proprioceptive experience of performed *katas/hyongs* then there is plausibility for them constituting proprioceptive art works.[20]

**(To I) Possessing positive, usually perceptual, aesthetic properties. This entry has been taken care of in (section 5.2): the muscle tension and spatial position of one's leg felt in a precise, head high kick, a punch with ideal acceleration and deceleration, a gravity defying 360° rotating jump, i.e., the *positive proprioceptive 'feel'* that a correctly conducted *kata/hyong* induces has, undeniably, perceptual aesthetic properties.**[21] To these do not only belong *pleasure* but also *wonder*, *appreciation*, and *awe*: think of the *marvel* when a new inner bodily experience arises which one has not undergone before or the *surprise* about the possibility of an unfamiliar arm or leg movement.[22]

**(To II) Being expressive of emotion. *Hyongs* can be performed in meditative ways as much as with almost brutal force and speed.** One can pause, hesitate, speed up, explode, hold one's head proudly up in the air, look down, etc. There's no *prima facie* reason why the width of emotions that can be expressed in *katas* is not as wide as in dance. If one performs the kata alone these embodied emotions are, of course, by and large felt interoceptively.

**(To III) Lacking any practical use. Undeniably, *katas* and *hyongs* can be utilised effectively to practice attacks and defences and, thus, imitate real combat.** In fact, this is their original purpose. Yet, also pre-Renaissance religious art, for example, used to have clearly circumscribed 'practical' purposes—worship, contemplation, education, etc.—but ceased to have these purposes. Actually, today, these roles are often forgotten and, clearly, the appreciation of, say, annunciations and crucifixions is possible while no religious practice is thereby exercised. This might well be or become true of proprioceptions: feeling the muscle tension accompanying a head high kick might not anymore be connected to a winning strike. Thus, *hyongs* and *katas*, just as other prototypes of art [cf. entry (XV)], too, have lost or, at least, may lose their original practical use.

**(To IV) Being potentially meaningful, i.e., having the capacity to convey complex meanings by representational properties. One can argue in two ways for the meaningfulness of *hyongs* and *katas*.** (i) Relating to these forms' initial purpose of virtual combat the felt proprioceptions are (potentially) meaningful in that they could stand for attacks and defences. (ii) Some performed combat patterns also represent yin/yang, indomitable loyalty, etc. as shown above.

Following up on (III), *katas* share the mere *potential* meaningfulness with, for example, the religious paintings mentioned: that the lilies in Fra Angelico's Annunciation frescos in Florence's St Marco Monastery stand for Marie's virginity might not be known to someone today who can nonetheless appreciate the balanced figures, harmonious colours, the calm and minimal

composition. In fact, everyone unfamiliar with the Christian doctrine might not even know who is depicted and why, yet, still enjoy the beauty of Fra Angelico's works.

The same holds for *katas* and *hyongs* (again cf. the prototype entry [XV]. A disciple of the martial arts might well not be interested at all in the martial aspects of her art or the philosophical principles (yin/yang) expressed and still enjoy the coherent composition of proprioceptions in abstraction from any reference to fight or philosophy.

**(To V and VI) Being formally complex and coherent; being an artefact or performance which is the product of a high degree of skill and expertise. The complicated sequential patterns of hyongs and the fairly high bodily physical demands speak for themselves here.**

**(VII) Sometimes having non-aesthetic, ceremonial or religious or propagandistic functions. Again, these are self-explanatory features (for propagandistic features, cf. my remark on *Po Eun hyong* in IX).**

**(VIII) Being intellectually challenging. Performing *hyongs* is not only physically but also intellectually demanding.** It is not at all easy to memorise the formally complex patterns that become more and more labyrinthian the higher one's grading.

Yet, this might not be meant by (VIII). Rather, it is the intellectual challenge an artwork poses to the perceiver, not the artist. Here, we encounter probably the first aspect in the family resemblance list that is not fulfilled by the proprioceptive awareness we have as artist and, simultaneously, as our own audience while performing a *hyong*. It seems that for us as audience (not as performer) there is not only little intellectual challenge, there is not even an intellectual process involved at all.

Luckily, this is no problem for a theory of family resemblance as it does not comprise a list of necessary features. Also, notice that a lack of intellectual challenge is fairly common and, thus, shared with other prototypes of art (cf. XV): while most modern 'classical' music (latest after Schönberg, Berg, Webern, etc.) does present such a challenge, earlier classical music might not and, thus, can be enjoyed with no mental effort whatsoever.

**(To IX) Exhibiting an individual point of view. Again, this is a feature not shared by martial arts.** Personal emotions might be felt (cf. I) and expressed (cf. II) but a stance regarding some political, philosophical, or some other public issue is hardly expressible when performing *katas*.

Having said that, one can imagine situations in which this is possible: take again *Po Eun hyong* which represents loyalty to king and country. If you perform it in front of the king (or refuse to) you might well express an individual point of view. Note, however, that this would be a visual performance, not the proprioceptive one I am here after.

It is also worth noting that individualism is a highly liberal, Western ideal to which Eastern arts do not necessarily subscribe.[23]

**(To X) Being original. With conductors and musicians performing pieces of classical music martial artists share that they 'only' interpret a pre-**

**existing score.** The *hyong*'s originality just as the music score's lies, so one could claim, first and foremost in the grand master's or composer's genius. Yet, clearly, also interpretations can be highly original as the CD market for new Bach, Beethoven or Beatles recordings attests to.

Also, although not encouraged in all martial arts, there are creative forms of *hyongs* where the novel, unconstraint, artistic composition of movements is allowed to the practitioner.

**(To XI and XII) Being the product of an intention to make a work of art; belonging to an established artistic form. These features are possibly not (yet) possessed by *hyongs* and *katas* but, hopefully, they will be if there is a potential for proprioceptive art works.**

**(XIII) Art is socially mediated. Proprioception, necessarily being a private experience, is elusive and difficult to communicate.** As a solitary enterprise, is, thus, proprioception not totally inapt to form a basis for socially mediated art? Well, just as not any arbitrary visual input one enjoys privately is art so is not any proprioception. In the possible paradigm cases I have introduced, *katas* and *hyongs*, the expertise to create artistic proprioceptions is and has to be acquired through one's master's teachings. Not just any odd movement and the caused proprioceptions constitute a proprioceptive artwork. Only those that have the right score, the right structure, the right harmony. For these reasons, discourse about proprioceptive art is not only possible but necessary. Public and social sets of rules, sets of expectations, the possibility of mistake, correction and critique do exist.

**(XIV) Objects sanctioned by the art schools. The two entries, XI and XII, considered above also relate to the theory of art, conventionalism, that is under concern here in (XIV).** Yet, in the martial arts, there is no established self-description as being artistic (in the Western sense of art) and, so, there is no convention or historic tradition yet. Thus, it has to be acknowledged that conventionalism in both its institutional and historical form is not quite the right theory of art to capture *hyongs*' and *katas*' artfulness.

**(XV) Bearing resemblance to prototypes. We are much better off concerning (XV), the similarity to prototypes: I have frequently referred to paradigm cases of art and pointed out their resemblance to *hyong* and *kata*.** Sure, my reference to samples of arts of a very different kind only helps to an extent because the mode of perception I advertise for martial arts, proprioception, is radically different from the sense experiences we have of the prototypes mentioned but many structural and semantic features are shared as has been seen in the case of performances of symphonies, sonatas, etc. and the religious art of pre-Renaissance Europe.

## 6 Evaluation

If what has been said here is an argument for *hyongs* and *katas* being art it is most probably not only an argument for them constituting a proprioceptive art but also for them being a visual art. Why, again, my focus on proprioception? I

have two substantial, and one mere psychological, reasons. I also have a missionary aim.

The psychological reason is that Ted Shawn's quote invites us to consider that further step: from being the stuff the art is made of to the embodied perception and internal joy of what that stuff does. For, why should the aesthetic perception of our bodies be restricted to its vision if we can enjoy direct, immediate interoception as well?

The first of the more substantial reasons is that there is, as a matter of fact, often no other audience than oneself when performing *katas*. Yet, oneself is mainly an internal proprioceiver of one's body, not a seer or hearer of its movements.

The second reason is that an even greater joy of such a performance emerges from the proprioceptive awareness of it than it does from vision. Take, for example, the felt correctness of a kick or punch: the right position of one's leg in space, the accurate acceleration, the precise muscle strain, etc. is proprioceptively an even greater pleasure than it is visually.

While many auditory and visual arts affect more the intellect than the emotions (or emotions only when mediated through the intellect), a proprioceptive art would be immediately connected with them.

Finally: just as, for example, the impressionists and cubists taught us new ways of seeing, the martial arts could teach us an entirely novel way to perceive artistically: to feel and perceive our bodies from within. Here, we'd find a positive affirmation of being embodied creatures. That's the normative, missionary part of my claim.

Two problems remain to be discussed.

(i) What's actually the artwork, i.e. the entity, in the case of *hyongs*? I have no answer. Yet, this ontological problem is far from being solved when considering, for example, music: is it the score, the performance, the sound waves, or whatever unfolds in the audience's mind? So, I don't feel too bad having no solution to this problem.

(ii) Is the argument not a slippery slope along the standard (mis-)interpretation 'everyone's an artist, everything is art' of Joseph Beuys' dictum *Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler* (Beuys 1985)? Would, for example, a sex-worker's performance on one's body, where intense proprioception is secured, be art? Maybe not, because his or her actions do not transcend the pleasure they give. They are not grown out of a practice that used to bear meaning and still potentially does. If, however, such meaning can be given to the sexual acts—arising from a kind of ritual, for example—and many more of the checklist entries can be met then there is probably no reason why sex-work could not become an art where a small audience, possibly just one person at a time, is attending the artist's performance.[24] Similar considerations might hold *mutatis mutandis* for massages, and also crafts that relate to other than the proprioceptive senses, like cooking or, maybe, perfume symphonies.[25]

I should say that I would not welcome the consequence that everything is art, for then nothing really is. Yet, unlike Shawn for dance, I also do not wish to claim exclusivity for martial arts as proprioceptive arts.

## 7 Summary

I have suggested in this chapter to view certain aspects of martial arts as proprioceptive art forms. What I hope to have achieved at minimum is to have enticed the reader to give the idea of proprioceived works of art a chance. If this has happened the space of possible sense perceptions that might constitute art has been further illuminated.

## 8 Addendum: 'the blessedness of will-less perception'

While, in this chapter, I can, for reasons of space, clearly not do justice to Arthur Schopenhauer's theory of art, I still wish to hint at the fact that one might well find arguments for why proprioception and the martial arts can be treated as art forms in his aesthetics.

For Schopenhauer, aesthetic perception is one way in which the will-tormented subject can achieve tranquillity. Remember that the will is, for the author of *The World as Will and Representation*, the blind raging force ['Willing as a whole has no end in view' (Schopenhauer 1818/1969, 165)] that makes the world, including us humans, move. There's nothing much positive about the will, as it is equally destructive as it is creative. Moreover, we are helpless victims of its 'endless striving' (Schopenhauer 1818/1969, 164) and capable of directing or countering it only to a very small degree. The best we can do to transcend this sad human condition is to try to calm this restless will within us. Amongst three ways to do so—asceticism in order to destruct the strained ego and selfless moral pity being the other two—aesthetic perception can serve this purpose. For, in aesthetic appreciation, which is a non-utilitarian pleasure, we may lose ourselves in the artwork and leave our individual,[26] purpose-bound will behind. Schopenhauer sees architecture, sculpture, painting, poetry, and especially music (opera) as paradigmatic means to reach such a pure and will-less state of mind and he speaks of 'the blessedness of the will-less perception' (Schopenhauer 1818/1969, 198). His theory is, thus, not so much a definition of art but rather a description of what it can achieve when it's at its best: the dissolution of the self in order to escape the straying will's claws.

Famously, Schopenhauer has been heavily influenced by Hindu and Buddhist thought and, so, it comes as no surprise that his theory of art might be used as a bridge between the Eastern martial arts' *dō* and the Western 'art.' For, like yogic practice[27], *hyongs* and *katas* can also be used as meditative self-dissolution techniques. Their physical aspects, the proprioception of our bodies' postures, movements, energy levels, etc., can be means to a better self-perception which is initially needed to ultimately overcome one's self. In the martial arts,

Schopenhauer's aesthetics could come close to his ascetics. Thus, seen in a Schopenhauer-esque way, performed *hyongs* may serve the double purpose of Western art and Eastern *dō*.

## Notes

1 I wish to thank Sabum Nim Thomas Weiss for having taught me how to enjoy the aesthetic pleasures of the proprioceptive art of Taekwon-Do. Thanks are also due to Rudolph Glitz, Philipp Hübl, and Claudia Flasdieck who have discussed earlier drafts with me and to an anonymous referee for the abundance of highly valuable comments. Tim Steeger helped me with the bibliography. Needless to say, the flaws that still remain are entirely my own responsibility. The chapter was finalised within the context of the Causation and Explanation Research Group funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG). For the countless inspirations regarding all topics related to the chapter's subject I am infinitely grateful to C.

2 A further interpretation of '*dō*' could be the Greek '*techné*.' (Thanks to Philipp Hübl for this hint.)

3 A discussion on whether already the definition of art should include value judgements can be found in Abell (2011).

4 There are, of course, competing approaches to art, such as prototype theory and conventionalism. I will come back to these accounts briefly.

5 I claim no originality for these entries. Almost all aspects are inspired by Adajian (2008).

6 (I) and (II) need to be distinguished: artworks might *invoke experiences of emotions* like joy as in (I), i.e., these are emotions one actually feels when perceiving the artwork, and, (II), they might be *expressive of an emotion*, i.e., they might refer to an emotion like anger. Here, it is not essential that the perceiver actually feels that emotion. It is enough if they are aware of the reference to that emotion.

7 A potential way to criticise prototype theory is to say that, since everything resembles everything else in some respect, one has to further specify the correct or right ways in which novel cases have to be like the paradigms. A catalogue of typical features seems necessary to be able to decide. Thus, prototype theory might want to refer to lists found in family resemblance theories.

8 Touch plays a huge role in design, of course, where the door knob, the chair, the touchpad, etc. have to have the right feel to them, but, still, there's no art form here that corresponds to touch as obviously as painting corresponds to vision. A case for design *being* art could possibly be made, yet, I wish to remain neutral on this issue here.

9 With the possible exception of art movements such as *Fluxus* where the physical interaction with the artworks was encouraged.

10 Scriabin planned his work *Mysterium* to exploit the senses of smell and touch as well as hearing. Cf.: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mysterium_(Scriabin)[Accessed 8 May 2014].

11 Sure, each of us has different physical abilities and attributes so that some differences in proprioceptions will result. Yet, this is no deviation from the faculties of sight or hearing.

12 Strikingly, the empiricists, early and modern, list all sensations, including proprioceptions, as equal in 'the given' (although they then frequently focus primarily on sight and hearing). Cf.: Carnap (1928/1998, §§76, 85, 131, 133), Mach (1897, §5 and 10 of Introductory Remarks, 10, 18).

13 Referring especially to Dewey, Tim Elcombe highlights the pragmatists' embodied notion of aesthetics, i.e. their insistence that the body is in its entirety, with all its senses including *kinesthetic sensations*, essential for aesthetic experiences: 'The lived body thus [...] is irreducibly the medium we use to wholly transact with the world

and gain an aesthetic, value-laden awareness of our existence' (Elcombe 2012, 206). This somewhat points to the possibility of a proprioceptive art.

14 Especially the vestibular system of the inner ears is responsible for equilibrioception: the sense of angular momentum and linear acceleration, including gravity. Thus, the vestibular system is essential to attain and maintain postural equilibrium and balance.

15 There are other similar claims about dance that are also true of the martial arts. Barry Allen quotes Francis Sparshott, a philosopher of dance: '"nothing is more characteristic of dance than the way it is energized; in learning an exotic dance style, what one has principally to master is how and where the energies go" (Sparshott 1995, 108)' (Allen 2013, 248) and then continues to point out that that is correct for our topic, too. However, I should mention that Allen points out differences to dance and art, too, one of them being that 'dance movements are endotelic, but more, they look endotelic. The beauty of martial arts movements has a different basis, since these movements are trained under a regime antithetic to endotelic value. The aesthetic quality of martial arts movements comes from their purposiveness, their instrumental effectiveness. Aesthetic quality is a byproduct of real efficacy' (Allen 2013, 250).

16 Yves Klein's Anthropométries, for example, where he uses naked female models, covered in International Klein Blue paint, as 'brushes.'

17 That is, in Kwon, Jae-Hwa's traditional Taekwon-Do (cf. Kwon 1992).

18 Many Buddhists believe that there are 108 defilements a person must overcome to achieve enlightenment. Malas (rosaries) usually have 108 beads and temples 108 steps.

19 Note aside that, whenever the almost superhuman skills of martial artists are depicted in films, they are either known to be blind (as, for example, Zatoichi), blinded in their ultimate fight (as, for example, Frank W Dux in the lesser B-movie *Bloodsport*), or they start to 'see' in a different, phenomena-transcending, way (like *Matrix*'s hero Neo).

20 There have been recent journal articles on aesthetic experiences, art, and the beauty of martial arts, yet, none discuss specifically the possibility of the martial arts being a proprioceptive art: cf. Elcombe (2012) and Allen (2013).

21 Allen (2013, 251) makes a similar point.

22 I am indebted to Philipp Hübl for these suggestions.

23 I thank an anonymous referee for that observation.

24 Some practitioners of BDSM claim that their ritualised sexual acts are indeed an art form. I do not know whether arguments for that claim have been presented and/or whether 'craft' rather than 'art' is meant. Similarly we might think of the propagation of physical love and respective techniques Kuârnava- and Guhyasamaja Tantra are known for (cf. Eliade 1954/2004, 213–214). In any case, we should not forget that the erotic is often related to the beautiful.

25 What about boxing, kick-boxing, wrestling, etc.? I have no good answer here. Some such sublimation of a sport that is commonly conceived as a mere physical exercise is offered by Yukio Mishima in his 'Sun and Steel: Art, Action and Ritual Death' (Mishima 1970). Japan's famous *seppuku* author took up weightlifting and reflects, in this autobiographical essay, upon martial arts, bodybuilding and the ways mind and body relate.

26 I omit, for reasons of space, the important aspect that, through art appreciation, we gain access to Platonic ideas (cf. Schopenhauer 1818/1969, §50) and are faced with the awe-inspiring sublime. Will-less de-individualisation is, thus, achieved through perception of Platonic universals and confrontation with the sublime.

27 Compare, for example, Patanjali's, i.e., Yoga's alleged founder's, Yoga-Sutras 1.2 and 1.3: 'Yoga is to still the patterning of consciousness'; 'then, pure awareness can abide in its very nature.'

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# 7

# A SUBLIME PEACE

*Ross Barham*

> Stillness in movement.
>
> *Takeda Yoshinobu Shihan*

## 1 Introduction

Immanuel Kant's aesthetics of the dynamically sublime in Nature can be adapted to illuminate and explain some of the central philosophical and phenomenological claims of the non-violent, Japanese martial art, aikido. In Kant's initial formulation, the emphasis is very much on visual perception as providing the most ready access to the sublime. In this light, aikido as a kinesthetic practice may not appear an obvious candidate for appreciating the sublime. However, given the practical non-violent nature of aikido, the 'vantage point of safety' that Kant claims as requisite to sublime experience may be sufficiently met via kinesthesia insofar as the techniques of aikido enable one to literally close the gap between oneself and the otherwise dominating might of an opponent, both safely and without negating the force of the attack. This then, is the central claim herein: by utilising Kant's account of the sublime to explore certain claims of aikido, Kant's original vision-based account will be further explicated to include kinesthetic appreciation also.[1]

## 2 The dynamically sublime in Nature

According to the account Kant provides in his *Critique of Judgment*, the dynamically sublime is appreciated as a mode of aesthetic judgement regarding the *might* of certain objects and phenomena.[2] This particular variety of the sublime is to be distinguished from that of the mathematically sublime, which

pertains to the *magnitude* of certain objects (see Kant 1790/1964, §26).[3] Might great enough to be judged sublime is commonly manifested in such objects as tsunamis, bushfires, earthquakes, etc. Thus it is that Kant writes specifically of the dynamically sublime in Nature:

> Bold, overhanging, and, as it were, threatening rocks, thunderclouds piled up the vault of heaven, borne along with flashes and peals, volcanoes in all their violence of destruction, hurricanes leaving desolation in their track, the boundless ocean rising with rebellious force, the high waterfall of some mighty river, and the like, make our power of resistance of trifling moment in comparison with their might.
>
> *Kant 1790/1964, 110*

Kant's emphasis on Nature is pertinent to the possibility of appreciating the sublime via the kinesthetic practices of aikido, for the interactions fostered by the art are man-made, at least insofar as they minimally involve a human *uke* (opponent) and *tori* (defender).[4] If Kant's account of the sublime necessitates that the objects of our aesthetic judgements belong exclusively to the realm of Nature, then it would seem that aikido should simply fall out of contention. However, seeing that Kant nowhere provides any explicit statement as to the significance of Nature in particular being judged sublime, it will be provisionally assumed that his emphasis arises simply by virtue of the fact that mighty objects occur so readily in the natural world.[5] This presumption is further supported by an aside Kant makes: that man-made war, when viewed with a certain disinterest, 'has something of the sublime in it' (Kant 1790/1964, 112–113). Assuming then, that Kant weds the dynamically sublime to Nature only insofar as we typically (and yet contingently) find sufficient might occurring in the natural world, there is *prima facie* little reason to think that a man-made practice, such as aikido, might not also provide a ready avenue for a Kantian model of sublime appreciation.[6]

The degree to which an object is mighty enough to be judged sublime, Kant claims, corresponds to its capacity to be 'represented as a source of *fear*' (Kant 1790/1964, 109, italics added). Fear is said to arise when objects that we are driven to oppose are too mighty for our powers of *resistance*. That is, when we are unable to overcome the might of objects that threaten to hinder our own might (and goodwill), those objects are said to have *dominion* over us, and so are fearful. Take the case of an erupting volcano: if we find ourselves stranded on a mountainside as a burning river of molten lava rushes down towards us, there is little we could do but turn and run in fear. Obviously under such circumstances, there is no scope for aesthetics of the sublime. According to Kant, sublime objects must be represented as exciting fear, but only from a vantage point of safety and security. It is here that Kant's emphasis on the visual seems to arise, for our faculty of vision allows us to perceive fearful might without immediate threat. And so, by safely viewing the eruption of the volcano from afar, we can nevertheless appreciate its might by *imagining* ourselves as vainly standing in

opposition to it. It is this capacity for imagination that makes it possible to judge an occurrence such as a volcanic eruption to be sublime; although one recognises the futility of any resistance to the might of Nature, one's capacity to recognise it causes our courageous spirit to well up and develop in response. According to Kant, the positive feeling of this rising of the spirit in the face of physical dominion allows for the realisation and development of our true values—greater than solicitous life and death—as in no way subject to the dominion of such physical forces. As Kant puts it (1790/1964, 109): 'Nature considered in an aesthetical judgment as might that has no dominion over us, is *dynamically sublime*.' And further:

> The recognition of our own physical helplessness as beings of nature reveals a faculty of estimating ourselves as independent of nature, and discovers a pre-eminence above nature that is the foundation of a self-preservation of quite another kind from that which may be assailed and brought into danger by external nature.
>
> *Kant 1790/1964, 111*

In this light, the aesthetic appreciation of the fearful might in nature is said to foster in us values that cannot be endangered by mere physical might; and we call objects that promote such development, 'sublime.'

## 3 The sublime in aikido

Aikido is a martial art. At the higher levels of proficiency, *uke* attacks the defending *tori* without reserve. In this sense, the might of an opponent is indubitable; if the attack were not neutralised in one way or another, then *tori* would surely be hindered by physical injury. As to the question of dominion: while it will vary from opponent to opponent as to whether they are superior to the potential resistance of the *tori*, it is an empirical fact that no single individual can at all times remain physically in a dominating position over all opponents. So, on the one hand, not all opponents will be deserving of fear. (Analogously, neither are all natural phenomena). It is only the ones that are, that have the potential to be judged sublime. On the other hand, of those opponents who are fearful: if aikido is a legitimate avenue for appreciating the sublime, then it must be able to provide a vantage point of safety and security from which we can regard that which can be 'represented as exciting fear' as, nonetheless, having no dominion over us.

Aikido is a civil art. The successful execution of any given technique depends as much on ensuring the safety of one's attacker as it does on the securing of one's own safety. As the founder of the art, Morihei Ueshiba (1883–1969),[7] put it (Ueshiba 1996, 105) : 'We want both attacker and defender to escape unharmed.' In order to achieve this ideal, the techniques of aikido aim to avoid all physical violence (i.e. collisions and tussles) by blending and harmonising with the movement and energy of one's attacker. In this way, the intended attack is

neutralised and so, nullified. At the higher levels of proficiency, the *aikidōka* (practitioner of aikido) is able to safely manoeuvre herself so as to form a connection with her opponent's might, without resisting it. As the adage goes: the safest place for a fly to land is on the handle of the swatter. In this way, one can appreciate the might of one's opponent even if it is physically dominating (in the sense that any attempt to resist it would be futile), and yet at the same time, be capable of doing so from a vantage point of safety. To again quote Ueshiba (1996, 106): 'Control an opponent by always putting yourself in a secure place.'

Let it be noted that practice of aikido need not guarantee a vantage point of physical safety from all opponents. Rather, it will suffice that the practice of aikido provides safety from at least some (if not most) opponents who would otherwise claim dominion. Analogously, the faculty of vision by itself does not necessarily ensure either one's safety from fearful might or the capacity to appreciate fearful might from a position of safety. This is because the might of some objects is so great that maintaining a safe distance would mean the effects of linear perspective will make the object too small to the eye to be regarded as fearful.

Let it also be noted that countering an opponent's attack by overcoming it either by resistance or counter-measures cannot fulfil the Kantian criterion regarding fear, as any effective resistance simply negates the possibility of dominion, either real or aesthetically imagined. If I block your punch or disarm it, say, with a leg sweep, then your attack simply fails to hold dominion over me. Similarly, the use of protective gear (helmets, armour, padding, etc.) appears incompatible with the possibility of sublime appreciation. Admittedly, it may be tempting to suppose that an actual physical impact with one's protective gear might provide a greater measure and appreciation for imagining the might of the attack had it not been muted so. However, I am inclined to think that the buffeting of such impacts will not be commensurate with the quiet and sustained uplifting character common to sublime experiences. Furthermore, the use of protective gear immediately mitigates (if not wholly negates) the possible dominion of one's opponents' might irrespective of the nature of the art itself. That is to say, in the context of protective gear, the martial techniques themselves are no longer vital in avoiding injury, whereas, in aikido, the avoidance of injury is made possible wholly by the successful execution of technique. And moreover, unlike the essential effect of protective gear, the art of aikido allows the might of the attack to remain vital and so potentially dominating, while at the same time providing the requisite vantage point of safety needed for the particular phenomenological qualities of sublime experience to arise. The principles of aikido allow the attack to be represented as exciting fear—for they are not negated or muted by resistance—but from a vantage point of safety. This then, it would seem, is one of the principal differences between aikido and most other martial arts.[8]

## 4 Kinesthetically sublime

Given that the practice of aikido is *prima facie* able to meet the several prerequisites demanded by Kant for the appreciation of the sublime (regarding might, dominion, fear, and safety), the question then arises as to why the primary sense in this context is kinesthetic rather than visual. After all, it might be thought that the safe vantage point provided by the non-violent techniques of aikido simply fulfil the function normally provided by distance. That is to say, typically a substantial physical distance must be maintained between an object and oneself in order to gain a safe vantage point—vision is what then grounds our faculty of imagination as nonetheless able to appreciate the fearful might of the object. In aikido, however, the techniques allow (and often require) one to close the gap of distance between the object and oneself in order to remain safe. But there is nothing obvious in this difference that would seem to entail that the aesthetic appreciation of the latter be kinesthetic. After all, why shouldn't the *aikidōka* simply employ the techniques of aikido to 'get a closer look' at the might of their opponent?

To begin with, the training strategies of aikido certainly favour the kinesthetic over the visual. Large portions of training regimes can often be conducted with closed eyes or while blindfolded,[9] whereas the visual will never be prioritised over the kinesthetic. This point is emphasized by Ueshiba when he explicitly warns against relying on the sense of vision:

> Don't look at the opponent's eyes, or your mind will be drawn into his eyes. Don't look at his sword, or you will be slain with his sword. Don't look at him, or your spirit will be distracted.
>
> *Ueshiba 1963, 178*

But most telling is the actual experience of practicing aikido, for there is, so to speak, very little to see. The lively attacks of one's opponent will either be something of a blur or, once a connection has been made, they will literally be too close to get a good look at. Rather, it is the sensitivity of the kinesthetic connection with the might and movement of one's opponent that dictates the form of the technique in aikido. As Ueshiba teaches: 'If your partner pulls, let him pull, but become one with that pull yourself' (Ueshiba 1996, 104). Here we have the perfect illustration of why aesthetic appreciation in aikido must be kinesthetic and not visual. A pull can only be seen if it is executed. Perhaps an opponent might signal their intention to pull in such a way as to be visually appreciable, but the pull itself, when it is met with an aikido technique, will not 'look' like a pull. It will look as though the *uke* has thrown himself. Once the physical gap has been closed (either by distance or harmony of movement), the *uke*'s attempts to attack become visually indistinguishable from the *tori*'s application of technique. This is true both from the perspective of the external observer and from the points of view of the *tori* and *uke*. The responsive sensitivity required of the *aikidōka* then, is principally kinesthetic rather than visual.

Given then that the aesthetic appreciation afforded by aikido is indeed principally kinesthetic, we can now raise and address the further issue as to why it must be so for it to accord with Kant's account of the sublime. After all, one may be wondering: if the might of one's human opponent is in fact capable of being fearfully represented as potentially dominating, why should it be only kinesthetically so? Could not a visual demonstration of a particularly mighty *kata* (choreographed martial sequence) or *haka* (war dance) be equally able to excite fear and so, sublime feeling in an observer? Or alternatively, might not the practice of non-contact sparring—where partners either 'pull their punches' or spar at a distance from one another—also be capable of evoking sublime appreciation?

In considering these questions, we begin to understand why it is that Kant stresses Nature (and man-made War) as the principal source of visual sublime experience. Recall: Kant writes the recognition of Nature's dominion promotes in us a sense of values, above 'worldly goods, health, life' (Kant 1790/1964, 111) that cannot be threatened or assailed by Nature. But the devaluing of such worldly goods is not only a reaction to a recognition of their ever-potential fragility and contingency, but moreover, a recognition of their worthlessness in protecting us from the dominating forces of the world at large. That is to say, Nature (or outright War) cannot be bought-off.

Keeping the above in mind: when we watch either a *kata* or a *haka*, or engage in non-contact sparring, the possibility remains live that such solicitous goods may be successfully invoked to placate and assuage the potential dominion of one's attacker. Indeed, in the case of pulling punches while sparring, a mutual presumption of trust is already implicitly in play. Obviously, Nature knows no such avenues of diplomacy. The same is true of aikido. As has been claimed above: one's *uke* attacks the defending *tori* without reserve; the attack remains vital and the potential for dominion is in no way negated by counter-measures or muting; but most important to the kinesthetic appreciation of the sublime, there is no possibility of assuaging the potential might of one's opponent via appeals to solicitous, worldly goods, for the figurative and literal space needed for such diplomacy has been closed. That is to say, the *uke*'s attack is present and live, and potentially dominating but for the (contingently) successful application of technique. The appreciation of the sublime afforded by aikido is necessarily kinesthetic insofar as the physical closing of the gap between *tori* and *uke* fulfils the role normally played by the unassailable dominion of Nature's disregard for solicitous goods and values. In this light, the art of aikido allows for sublime experience by providing a vantage point of safety from which to aesthetically appreciate manifestations of might that potentially hold dominion over us insofar as they cannot be countered either by negation nor by appeal to worldly values.

There remains, however, one further question as to the supposed appropriateness of applying Kant's aesthetic of the sublime to the practice of aikido: exactly what is judged sublime by aikido?

## 5 What is sublime?

In Kant's original account, although the feeling of the sublime comes from an uprising of our own courageous spirit by way of safely recognising and so, transcending the physical dominion that Nature has over us, nonetheless it is the objects of Nature (e.g. volcanoes, tsunamis, tornadoes, etc.) that are commonly spoken of as sublime. We call the vision of the erupting volcano *sublime* because the responsive welling of our courageous spirit in the face of such fearful might enables us to positively appreciate the physical dominion that Nature has over us and, in doing so, transcend that dominion. In aikido, however, it is never claimed that one's opponents should come to be regarded as sublime. Nor their intended attacks and violence. And while there is certainly a tendency to idolise both Ueshiba (otherwise known as *Ōsensei* or great-teacher) and the art itself,[10] neither sit comfortably with the kind of judgement Kant seeks to characterise in his *Critique*.

It is tempting to suppose that each successful application of a technique (or their conjunction) may be called sublime, for this is precisely what enables the sublime experience—not of a fearful rush of adrenaline that will normally accompany a mighty attack, but rather a calm, level-headed welling of courage. However, this response will not suffice, for taking the kinesthetic as analogous to the visual, the technique itself is thought to parallel the faculty of vision, which is not the sublime, but rather what enables the experience of the sublime. In this light, the technique provides the kinesthetic vantage point of safety from which to appreciate the sublime, but cannot be said to be the sublime itself.

Fortunately, an alternate route suggests itself in the way by which the supposed effects of practicing aikido have been characterised (albeit somewhat esoterically) by the art's founder.

According to Ueshiba, by perfecting the harmonious, blending movements of aikido, the *aikidōka* concomitantly gains spiritual atonement with the *ki* (or 'might') of the whole universe:

> The secret of Aikido is to harmonize ourselves with the movement of the universe and bring ourselves into accord with the universe itself. He who has gained the secret of Aikido has the universe in himself and can say, 'I am the universe.'
>
> *Ueshiba 1996, 177*

The *aikidōka* is thus characterised as utilising their opponent's attacks as something like a cosmic sounding board, where the localised physical connection between *tori* and *uke* serves as a conduit, spiritually connecting *tori* with the universe at large.

Of course, we would be loath to unquestioningly endorse such an overtly mystical characterisation as the grounds of any credible aesthetic philosophy. But perhaps something of the sentiment here expressed by Ueshiba's non-

naturalistic conception can nevertheless be sufficiently salvaged in Kantian terminology. Put it this way: by safely appreciating the otherwise fearful might of one's opponent kinesthetically, the *aikidōka*'s courageous spirit is able to grow and develop, such that they can thereby judge the whole of Nature sublime and in this way find atonement. Thus, while it is indeed the fearful might of an opponent's attack that evokes the sublime, the focal point is taken to be much broader indeed.

This appropriation appears in keeping with the gradual transcending of normal everyday values that Kant claims is the effect of appreciating the sublime. As Ueshiba writes of aikido:

> Winning and losing is not true *budo*. True *budo* knows no defeat. 'Never defeated' means 'never fighting.' [...] This is not mere theory. You practice it. Then you will accept the great power of oneness with Nature.
>
> *Ueshiba 1996, 178*

And further:

> I am calm however and whenever I am attacked. I have no attachment to life or death. I leave everything as it is to the kami [gods]. Be apart from attachment to life and death and have a mind that leaves everything to Him, not only when you are being attacked but also in your daily lives.
>
> *Ueshiba 1996, 179*

As was mentioned in the previous section, according to Kant, the aesthetic appreciation of the sublime encourages the gradual transcendence of values beyond that affected by Nature's dominion. The universe cannot be appealed to by our common, petty system of values [i.e. 'worldly goods, health, life,' etc. (Kant 1790/1964, 111)]. Nonetheless, the aesthetic appreciation of the sublime is said to occasion a development of character whereby one eventually finds atonement with the nature of Nature itself. For, while the universe necessarily provides the very conditions for the possibility of our existence, it equally determines (in one way or another) its inevitable cessation, also. Appreciation of the fearful dominion of the objects in Nature can make this readily apparent to us. So too can martial violence. By practicing aikido, one strives to come in direct contact with forces that seek to undermine the continuation of one's being. But in doing so, the *aikidōka* seeks to not succumb to vainly fighting fire with fire. Instead, the ultimate aim of aikido and what Kant calls the 'destination' of our humanity (Kant 1790/1964, 112), might best be described as *a sublime peace*.

Indeed, although it may be objected that the sublime is here being smuggled in by fiat as a normative claim (i.e. that one *ought* to appreciate Nature as sublime while practicing aikido, rather than as a necessary result explained by the vantage point of safety afforded by aikido in particular), it will be seen that no further argument is required as to why aikido must give rise to sublime

experience.[11] Firstly, the 'argument' herein is strictly analogical. It is enough to have shown that the kinesthetic characteristics of aikido sufficiently parallel Kant's account of visual appreciation of the might of natural phenomena. That said, secondly and most telling, although I believe the preceding discussion to be illuminating in its own right, it may be that we have been chasing something of a red herring in asking what is sublime in aikido itself; for as Kant later explains:

> Sublimity does not reside in any of the things of Nature, but only in our own mind, in so far as we may become conscious of our superiority over Nature within, and thus also over Nature without us (as exerting influence upon us). Everything that provokes this feeling in us, including the might of Nature, which challenges our strength, is then, though improperly, called sublime...
>
> *Kant 1790/1964, 114*

It is not then aikido that is sublime, but rather the wellspring and growth of the inner peace in the *aikidōka* herself. Aikido and the appreciation of the might of natural phenomena can only ever hope to provide space and opportunities for the sublime to arise and grow both within the subject and—in the context of aikido in particular—in the world around her.

## Notes

1 The exclusivity of this focus on kinesthesia, however, is not to imply that the sublime might not also be appreciated via other senses.
2 Kant himself writes simply of objects, and so I shall follow him in this for the sake of brevity.
3 Now that the distinction has been made, I shall write of 'the sublime' as meaning 'the dynamically sublime.' As to the further matter of why Kant should have regarded, for instance, statically suspended rocks as 'dynamic' despite the fact that they needn't move in order to be regarded as sublime, the answer lies in Kant's explanation of the quality of magnitude in the 'mathematically sublime' (see Kant 1790/1964, §26). As he explains there, although literally speaking ordinal numbers have no magnitude (e.g. 2 is not 'bigger' than 1), we are only able to understand the mathematical relation of numbers by way of transferring upon them our literal understanding of physical magnitudes. In the same way then, although sublime natural phenomena need not be dynamically in motion, our appreciation of their (potential) might and dominion is essentially dependent upon our understanding of the literally dynamic in Nature. That said, I do not think these considerations significantly impinge upon the thesis herein.
4 Strictly speaking, in aikido 'there are no opponents, no enemies' (Ueshiba 1996, 101), rather, only partners and fellow human beings. That said, I will continue to use the label, 'opponent,' for the sake of clarity.
5 There is, perhaps, something more to Kant's emphasis on Nature; namely, that the forces of might that we encounter in the natural world are fearful without being intentional and so cannot be assuaged by human values and appeals, and that the physical universe—as the very foundation of the possibility of one's individual existence—will inevitably spell its end. The potential significance of such deeper readings, however, will be addressed by the conclusion of the argument.

6 Of course there are other aesthetic models of the sublime (Arthur Schopenhauer's being the most well-known) that may or may not be a better fit for the aesthetic experience of aikido. Owing to limited space and expertise, however, we shall have to herein constrain our attention to the Kantian alone.
7 For a biography of Ueshiba, see his son's canonical account in Ueshiba (1963, 145–156).
8 Of course, this in no way is to suggest that other martial arts are not capable of aestheticism, sublime or otherwise. Nor is it to imply that they are in any way inferior to aikido. It is only to advocate that, *prima facie* (and most likely owing to my own inexcusable ignorance of the philosophies, practices, and phenomenology of other martial arts), the non-violent practices of aikido can here serve as a paradigm of compatibility with the Kantian account of the sublime.
9 In my own club, we sometimes train outdoors in the moonlight specifically to emphasize the kinesthetic aspects of the art by downplaying the visual.
10 E.g.: 'The Art of Peace is the religion that is not a religion; it perfects and completes all religions' (Ueshiba 2002, §112).
11 Thanks are owed to an anonymous referee for articulating and inviting me to respond to this potential objection.

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# 8

# ON SELF-AWARENESS AND THE SELF

*Koji Tanaka*

## 1 Self-awareness and martial arts

Imagine that you are in the middle of a *kendō* or fencing match faced with an opponent. You see a slight movement in the tip of the opponent's *shinai* or sabre. In that moment, if you took the brief time to *think* to yourself: 'I see an opening, now is the time to counter-strike!,' then it is likely that you would already be struck by the opponent before you can counter-strike. Given the speed of the opponent's attack, you do not have the time to think what to do, and then respond. Your response must be instantaneous. However, if you do not think that it is the right moment, how can you even respond at all? How can you respond to the movement of your opponent without thinking?

This koan-like question requires a careful analysis of actions. It requires us to investigate what makes it possible for us to act, and how an instantaneous response can be said to be *our* response, i.e., a response that we are responsible for.[1] However, whatever we can say about actions in relation to our mental activity is also related to the issue of the state of our awareness. Before you can respond to the movement of your opponent, seeing the movement must be part of *your* experience in that moment. In order for this to be the case, an awareness of your opponent's movement must also form part of *your* awareness.

In recent years, some philosophers of mind, cognitive scientists and phenomenologists have advanced the thesis that an awareness of an object is not just an experience of that object but also involves self-awareness. The most sustained argument for the thesis has been provided by Damasio (2000). He has argued that every consciousness or every conscious experience comes with a 'sense of self.' He writes:

> You are looking at this page, the text and constructing the meaning of my words as you go along. But concern with text and meaning hardly describes

> all that goes on in your mind. In parallel with representing the printed words and displaying the conceptual knowledge required to understand what I wrote, your mind also displays something else, something sufficient to indicate, moment by moment, that *you* rather than anyone else are doing the reading and the understanding of the text.
>
> *Damasio 2000, 10*

What characterises your conscious experience, according to Damasio, is the 'presence of you in a particular relationship with some object' (Damasio 2000, 10). By this, he is not advancing the Cartesian thought that, insofar as *you* are experiencing an object, *you* must be present in order to have that experience. That is, he is not advancing an *ontological* claim that there must *be* you when you experience an object. He means that, from the first-person perspective, there is you, or an *appearance* of you, in the awareness of object. In other words, Damasio's claim is, I take it, a *phenomenological* one: when you are aware of an object, that awareness includes you. Damasio writes thus:

> The full scope of your mind is not confined to images of what is being perceived externally or of what is recalled relative to what is perceived. It also includes you.
>
> *Damasio 2000, 128*

According to Damasio, it is, in fact, pathological to have an experience of an object (or objects arranged in a certain way) without having a sense of self. He cites the cases of epileptic automatism and akinetic mutism to show that it is pathological for the self not to be present in one's conscious experience.[2]

Now, from a Buddhist perspective, the notion of self-awareness that Damasio argues to be a necessary component of our conscious experience may be thought to be problematic given the Buddhists' adherence to the no-self (*anattā* or *anātman*) doctrine. Moreover, if we thought that Buddhist doctrines inform (some forms of) martial arts, then the experiences of martial artists who have realised the no-self doctrine might be thought to be counter-examples to Damasio's thesis that our awareness necessarily involves self-awareness.[3]

The sixteenth/seventeenth century Zen Buddhist Takuan Sōhō might be thought to present such a sceptical stance towards self-awareness. In providing Zen teachings to some of the leading sword-masters of his time, he says that if you experience *yourself* responding to your opponent, then, in that very moment, your mind will be taken by the self of which you are aware. Then 'you will lose your movements and you will be struck by your opponent' [*Mumyō Jūchi Bonnō* in *Fudōchishinmyōroku* (The Record of Immovable Wisdom)].[4] In responding to the opponent without delay, an awareness of the self 'gets in the way.' According to Takuan, because of the awareness of yourself, you may respond to *yourself* counter-acting the opponent's strike. But, in doing so, you may not respond to the opponent's strike as such. Once you become aware of yourself, then the game is over. In fact, much of training in *kendō* consists of

learning to force your opponent to become aware of themselves. Takuan describes the tactic of making the opponent become aware of the self as 'Taking hold of the enemy's spear and making it the instrument of your enemy's own destruction' (*Mumyō Jūchi Bonnō*).

Takuan does not provide a detailed account of awareness that he thinks is problematic for martial artists. *Prima facie*, however, Damasio's thesis about the necessity of self-awareness appears to be inconsistent with Takuan's teaching. In responding to the opponent's strike, the martial artists are told to be in a state where they them*selves* are no longer experienced and, thus, there is no self of which they are aware. If this is a rejection of self-awareness, then, according to Damasio, their experiences are said to be pathological or they can hardly be said to be conscious experiences. How would Takuan and other Buddhists respond to this?

In this chapter, I shall investigate the notions of self-awareness and no-self.[5] I shall, in particular, present a discussion of the notions from Buddhist perspectives.[6] As is evidenced by several Buddhist accounts of no-selfhood discussed in Siderits, Thompson and Zahavi (2011), there is no unified doctrine of no-self that is endorsed by all Buddhists. Consequently, it is a matter of debate as to how best to understand Buddhist notions of no-self and which no-self doctrine is or should be applicable to the phenomenology of martial artists who are 'in the act.' I shall consider two Buddhist no-self doctrines: the no-self doctrine that can be found in the *Nikāyas* (part of the Pāli canon) and another that is discussed by the thirteenth century Japanese Zen Buddhist Dōgen. By presenting an early development and a later development of Buddhist thought, I will show a change of focus in considering no-selfhood. Moreover, I will demonstrate that, while *Nikāyas*' no-self doctrine is not applicable to martial artists, Dōgen's account accurately describes the phenomenology of martial artists. I will also show that, once we understand Takuan's teaching in terms of Dōgen's account, then we can see that Damasio's thesis does not contradict Takuan's teaching.

## 2 No-self in the *Nikāyas*

In the *Nikāyas*, the contents of experience are analysed in terms of five 'aggregates' [*skandha* (Sanskrit) or *khandha* (Pāli)]: material matter (i.e., the object of experience), feeling, perception, volition and consciousness. These 'aggregates,' in their particular forms, are thought to exhaustively constitute any particular experience. From an experiential point of view, there is nothing other than those aggregates that could constitute an experience. Importantly, it is denied that the self can be found in the bundle of the streams of conscious experiences. In the *Nikāyas*, the Buddha is depicted to have said:

> Material matter is nonself. [...] Feeling is nonself. [...] Perception is nonself. [...] Volition is nonself. [...] Consciousness is nonself.
>
> *Saṃyutta Nikāya, 22.59*[7]

In the *Milindapañhā*, an analysis of this kind is extended to a consideration of the aggregates collectively. In the famous (actual or otherwise) dialogue between King Milinda and the Buddhist monk Nāgasena, it is said that 'the pole, the axle, the wheels, the body of the chariot, the flag-staff of the chariot, the yoke, the reins, the goad' collectively are not the chariot.[8]

According to the *Nikāyas* (and the *Milindapañhā*), there is nothing which forms one's experience that can count as the self. But what exactly is the self that is said not to form experience? In the *Sallekha Sutta* contained in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, we find the following passage:

> [A]s to those various views that arise in the world associated either with doctrines of a self or with doctrines about the world: if [the object] in relation to which those views arise, which they underlie, and which they are exercised upon is seen as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self,' then the abandoning and relinquishing of these views comes about.
>
> *Sallekha Sutta, 3*[9]

The notion of selfhood which is denied in the *Nikāyas* seems to be something we construct in relation to what we experience. When I become aware of harsh words directed at me, for example, I may identify *myself* as someone who is described by those words. According to the *Nikāyas*, what I am doing when I make such an identification is that I am taking *personal ownership* of what those words describe; that is to say that those words become *mine*. It is not only the object of awareness (i.e., harsh words) that is taken as mine, but the whole experience consisting of those words and other aggregates such as feeling associated with them that may also be personally owned. As a result, that experience becomes identified as mine. The self, 'mineness,' which arises from this process is, however, a construction. By making identification and taking personal ownership of the 'image' that I construct based on the harsh words, I identify myself with those words in my experience. It is this constructed self which is thought to arise as soon as we become aware of objects and other aggregates that is often described to be problematic in the *Nikāyas*.[10]

According to the *Nikāyas*, the identification of an object or an experience on the whole as *me* involves a creation of 'me' out of the fleeting streams of consciousness. Such identification involves a unification of the contents of consciousness at each moment. This unification gives rise to synchronic identity as me now. Unity created in identification also involves a projection of the self to the past and the future giving rise to diachronic identity. The contents of consciousness across times are unified and given diachronic identity. But, the synchronic and diachronic self created in this way assumes more stability and continuity than the fleeting nature of the streams of consciousness can warrant.[11] Hence, so the argument goes, the self that is created to form one's experience is only an appearance. The no-self view

expressed in the *Nikāyas* is that there is nothing in consciousness which corresponds to any attribute that the self is said to have.

Now, in responding instantaneously to the movement of the opponent, it is problematic for martial artists to treat an experience as *mine* and constructing a fictional entity, i.e., a self, of which they become aware at the time of responding. However, is the awareness of a fictional self problematic for the martial artists because it is an awareness of something which, in fact, does not exist? It is certainly the case that thinking of something as existing while it in fact does not is epistemically problematic. Yet, is there anything problematic about the awareness of a fictional self specifically in the context of responding instantaneously?

The answer seems to be no. In fact, the no-self view described above does not seem to be applicable to the experience of martial artists. On that view, a construction of a self is made possible by identifying experiences as mine. This means that there is, in fact, nothing personal about the streams of consciousness. However, in order for me to respond to the opponent's movement, an experience of seeing the movement must already be *my* experience before the identification. For my immediate response to be possible, the content of that experience must be immediately available to *me*. The reason why I can respond to my opponent is because the opponent's movement is experienced as directed towards *me* from the very first moment of seeing the movement. Hence, the no-self doctrine described in the *Nikāyas* does not accurately capture the experience of accomplished martial artists. We need to provide a different no-self view that, nevertheless, can explain the availability of the contents of their experience to them*selves*.

## 3 Self-awareness and the first-personal givenness

In analysing the phenomenology of martial artists, we have, so far, focused on the object-directed nature of our conscious experience. Insofar as it is an experience of objects, the experience that a martial artist has is, in some sense, 'given' to them. My experience of the opponent striking me, for example, is not necessarily a result of the free creation of the mind. The opponent's movement must be experientially 'given' to me for it to count as my *experience* of the opponent, even though the experience may not be completely veridical with respect to what is, in fact, in front of me.

As Zahavi (2005) and other phenomenologists also emphasize, an experience of objects must be more than this. If it were not, my experience of the opponent as I stand in front of her or him would be exactly the same as your experience of it if we were to be in the same circumstance. The 'external' situation involving the opponent just 'gives' us the same contents of experiences. Assuming that it is the same situation we are experiencing, we would then have to conclude that our experiences are exactly the same. This would mean that we could not talk about 'what it is like' to be faced with a fierce opponent in the way that would explain the differences of our experiences. Depending on the level of accomplishment,

however, we may experience an opening for counter-strike or a feeling of defeat as advanced martial artists can testify. So, we must assume that we bring something to the experienced object or situation. That is, that which is given to us must be 'coloured' by what we bring to it. What colours the content of experience may be thoughts, beliefs, ideas, feelings and volitions, giving some quality to the object or situation that is experienced. They may also be physical such as bodily sensations. Pain in my ankle may add more physical and psychological discomfort to my experience of being struck, for example.

So, our experiences must have at least two aspects. On the one hand, there must be a passive aspect: the givenness of the object experienced. On the other hand, there must be an active aspect: the bringing of something to that which is 'given.' An experience is where these two aspects are tightly interconnected. It is because of the enmeshment of these two aspects that an object appears to us in the way it does. As Zahavi puts it:

> Phenomenology pays attention to the givenness of the object, but it does not simply focus on the object exactly as it is given; it also focuses on the subjective side of consciousness, thereby illuminating our subjective accomplishments and the intentionality that is at play in order for the object to appear as it does. When we investigate appearing objects, we also disclose ourselves as datives of manifestation, as those to whom objects appear.
>
> *Zahavi 2005, 123*

That is, experience is where an object becomes available to the subject of experience, and, thus, an investigation of experienced objects necessarily involves a disclosure of the subject.[12]

Zahavi characterises the enmeshment of the passivity and activity of experiences in terms of the *first-personal givenness*. As he writes:

> This first-personal givenness of experiential phenomena is not something incidental to their being, a mere varnish that the experiences could lack without ceasing to be experiences. On the contrary, this first-personal givenness makes the experiences *subjective*. To put it another way, their first-personal givenness entails a built-in self-reference, a primitive experiential self-referentiality.
>
> *Zahavi 2005, 122*

According to Zahavi, the reason why my experience is available to me is because my experience is something that is first-personally given to me. It is because of this first-personal givenness that some experiences can be said to be *my* experiences. In order to capture this aspect of experiences, Zahavi characterises them in terms of the *reflexive* nature of experiences.

To understand experiences in this way is to think of my experience as individuated simply because it is *my* experience. When I see the movement of

the opponent, I wouldn't experience it as someone else's experience. It is experienced as *my* experience. This minimum sense of *mineness* is what Zahavi calls the self. Thus, for Zahavi, the self is not something that stands in an external relation to experience. The self is just mineness that is integral to the structure of experiences that can be revealed from a first-person perspective (see Zahavi 2005, 124ff.).

It is important to recognise that, on this view, self-awareness is not an awareness *of* the self. 'I' is not something that is added to what is first-personally given. Rather, it is the structure of awareness that reveals what is available for the subject of experience. In this sense, self-awareness can be understood as 'world-immersed'-self-awareness. As Zahavi writes:

> [S]elf-awareness is not to be understood as an awareness of an isolated worldless self, nor is the self located and hidden in the head. To be self-aware is not to interrupt the experiential interaction with the world in order to turn to gaze inward; on the contrary, self-awareness is always the self-awareness of a world-immersed self. The self is present to itself precisely and indeed only when worldly engaged.
>
> *Zahavi 2005, 125–126*

This is why my awareness of the opponent's movement is also my self-awareness which makes possible for *me*, and not anyone else, to respond instantaneously.

Zahavi uses this minimum notion of the self as forming an argument for the reality of the self. He rhetorically asks:

> Why not rather insist that the self is real if it has experiential reality and that the validity of our account of the self is to be measured by its ability to be faithful to experience, by its ability to capture and articulate (invariant) experiential structures?
>
> *Zahavi 2005, 128*

The advocates of the no-self doctrine do not necessarily have to reject the world-immersed nature of awareness as we will see in the next section. What they would have to object to is calling the minimum sense of *mineness* the self.[13] For what we should reserve the word 'self,' however, seems to be just a semantic question and no significance can come out of debating on the question. What is important is understanding the nature of self-awareness and its relation to selfhood understood in this minimum sense.

If we follow Zahavi and understand the self in terms of the first-personal givenness of experiences, then the self does not seem to get in the way of responding to the opponent for martial artists. If anything, it is because the experience is mine and immediately available for me to respond that I can instantaneously react to the opponent's movement. Instead of getting in the way of responding, self-awareness seems to be what enables martial artists to respond. However, does this mean that self-awareness is an unproblematic

notion for martial artists? As we will see in the next section, Dōgen has a warning about self-awareness and it is exactly this warning that Takuan can be thought of as offering to the martial arts.

## 4 The exertion of the self

In order to understand the kind of experience that becomes problematic for martial artists, let's reconsider the two aspects of experiences that we discussed before. We have seen that experiences can be characterised in terms of their passivity and activity. My experience of facing an opponent is, on the one hand, passive in the sense that the opponent's movement must be 'given' to me. On the other hand, it is active in the sense that there must be something that is added to the 'given.' It is because of this active element that the experience is *my* experience. But what is added to the 'given' in order for the experience to be of a certain quality comes in degrees. In facing the opponent's movement, a number of psycho-physical elements must come together to form an experience. Depending on the degree of fear I have in facing a superior opponent, I may experience uneasiness or terror. When pain in my ankle in the form of bodily sensations asserts itself, my experience may be of discomfort or anguish. So what contributes to the particular quality of experience depends on not just what qualities make up experience but also the degree to which each quality is brought to the surface.

In some situation, some elements may be forcefully exerted in order to have certain experiences. For example, the thought that '*I* see an opening, now is the time to counter-strike!' may form my experience of seeing the opponent's movement. Such a thought can allow me to experience the opponent's movement as an attack, rather than a trick, which needs to be responded to. Given that I can respond to the attack only if I see the movement as an *attack* rather than simple forward movement, I may forcefully bring the thought of counter-striking into play *so that* I can parry the opponent's strike. In such a situation, responding to the opponent becomes possible by the presence of the self that forms the thought. Because of the self in addition to what is given to me, however, the experience is of *myself* counter-striking the opponent. As Takuan tells us, when we forcefully bring ourselves to the situation in order to respond, our mind is caught by the self of which we are aware and, as a result, we are unable to respond to the opponent in time.

According to Dōgen, such an exerted self is the result of striving to achieve an end. We want to put ourselves in a certain situation by means of action. When a self is brought to bear *in order to* counter-strike, however, we are (phenomenologically) carrying ourselves forward in responding to the opponent's movement. In carrying ourselves forward in order to achieve an end, the self is brought above what is first-personally given. An awareness of the opponent's movement then becomes an awareness of ourselves being about to be struck. Such awareness creates a distance between what is first-personally given and the self of which we are aware, since the self is brought into play over

and above what is first-personally given.[14] In order to be able to respond immediately, however, we need to put our mind to what is right in front of us and let it form our experience. As Dōgen puts it:

> Carrying the self forward to verify-in-practice the myriad things is delusion; for the myriad things to come forth and verify-in-practice the self is enlightenment. [15]
>
> *Genjōkōan, 4*

Once the self is forcefully brought into play over and above what is first-personally given, we become unable to respond immediately to the opponent's movement. It is this self that the martial artists must 'forget.' By paraphrasing Dōgen:

> To study the way of martial arts is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be verified by the myriad things [of the world].[16]

By forgetting the self, nothing arises above what is first-personally given. It is when the self is not exercised as a means to end that a martial artist can have immediate engagement with the world without any mediation by the self. Martial artists must be self-aware in the sense that their engagement with the situation must be immediately available to them. Yet, they must not be aware *of* the self which is brought to the surface *in order to* respond. Martial artists must just respond immediately.

## 5 Self-awareness, the self and martial arts

Who's there when I am faced with an opponent? There is the opponent, of course. But there is also *me* since that is what it is for *me* to respond. From the point of view of some Buddhists, such answer may appear to be problematic because of their adherence to the no-self doctrine. However, that there is a subject responding to the opponent is just a fact for the martial artists. There is nothing but *me* to get out of the situation that the opponent has forced me into.

Faced with an opponent who is about to strike me, I can respond by thinking to myself: 'I see an opening, now is the time to counter-strike!' According to Dōgen, responding in this way involves the self *in terms of which* I could respond. We can think of Takuan as following Dōgen and urge the martial artists not to respond to their opponents in that way. The 'I' that is exerted over the first-personally given in order to experience my opponent's attack and to control my movement in response is problematic. It is the instrumentally exerted self over and above the first-personally given experience that Takuan identifies as problematic.

Now, Damasio has claimed that when I am aware of an object, I necessarily have the sense of the self. He has argued that it is pathological not to be self-

aware when I experience an object. If we understood his claim to be that I must be aware of myself *in order to* have an experience of the object, then the experiences of the martial artists might be thought to be counter-examples to Damasio's claim. Takuan urges the martial artists to disengage from such experiences.

Damasio's claim can be understood differently, however. Damasio argues for the necessity of self-awareness. However, he does not argue, as far as I am aware, that the awareness of the self is what allows us to have experiences at all. All he argues is that it is pathological for me to have an experience as someone else's experience, or not as my experience. In other words, as Zahavi argues, if my experience does not have the reflexive structure allowing its content to become available to me, I cannot be said to have experiences at all. Takuan doesn't deny this. He does not urge the martial artists not to experience the opponent's movement as their experience. In fact, it is the self-awareness as understood by Damasio and Zahavi that makes them possible to respond. Hence, Damasio's claim can hardly pose a problem in characterising the martial artists' experiences as conscious experiences if we understand their experiences from the perspectives of Dōgen and Takuan.[17] What the martial artist must *not* do, according to Takuan, is forcefully bring the self into play *in order to* respond. In other words, Takuan identifies the instrumental notion of selfhood as problematic for the martial artists. Martial artists must be self-aware without being aware of themselves in terms of which they can respond.

## Notes

1 For a discussion of actions involved in *kendō*, see Finnigan and Tanaka (2010).
2 See Damasio (2000, 94ff.) and other places where he refers to his clinical observations.
3 I use the phrase 'martial artists' with some reservation. The phenomena with which I am concerned in this chapter are more salient in tennis, cricket and soccer than in tai chi, for example. Nonetheless, I talk about *kendō* players as 'martial artists' in general for convenience even though I do not suggest that my discussion is applicable to all or only forms of martial arts.
4 Translations of Takuan's writings contained in this chapter are mine. An alternative English translation can be found in Wilson (1986).
5 Phenomenology of sports players has been discussed by, for example, Breivik (2013) and Dreyfus (2002). Their discussions focus on representation and deliberation that may or may not be involved in sporting activities rather than self-awareness and no-self.
6 Several contemporary Western philosophers of mind have also advocated no-self views and they have explained the kind of consciousness that does not involve the self in terms of such views. See, for example, Dennett (1991) and Metzinger (2003).
7 An English translation can be found in Bodhi (2000, 901–902).
8 An English translation can be found in Horner (1969, 37). For an analysis of the *Milindapañhā*, see for example Siderits (2003, Chapter 3).
9 An English translation can be found in Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi (2001, 123).
10 I owe this analysis to Albahari (2006) which contains an excellent discussion of the issues of self-awareness and the self from the perspective of the *Nikāyas* (although the position on consciousness and the self she develops in the end is something that I do not recognise as Buddhist nor do I agree with). See, in particular, Albahari (2006, Chapter 3).

11 The *Nikāyas* contain several passages presenting arguments of this kind in terms of impermanent nature of experiences. See, for example, the *Nandakovāda Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. An English translation can be found in Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi (2001, 1120–1125).
12 This is also the way that Arnold (2008) characterises the Buddhist notion of *svasaṃvitti* or *svasaṃvedana* developed by the Buddhist epistemologists/logicians Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. I have left out an analysis of *svasaṃvedana* as it is a controversial issue among Buddhist scholars. I have, instead, appealed to the phenomenological investigation by Zahavi to bring out an element of experience that is important for the martial artists.
13 See, for example, Albahari (2011) who, while accepting most of Zahavi's notion of self-awareness, argues against Zahavi's claim about the reality of the self.
14 We can think of this distance as the subject/object duality that is often emphasized in the Yogācāra school of Buddhist philosophy.
15 This translation is from Davis (2009). For a commentary emphasizing the notion of the self, see Davis (2011). In this passage, Dōgen is rejecting the instrumental nature of practice according to which practice is instrumental in bringing about enlightenment. For a discussion of this point, see Finnigan (forthcoming).
16 What Dōgen says is the following: 'To study the Buddha Way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be verified by the myriad things [of the world]' (*Genjōkōan*, 6). This translation is from Davis (2009).
17 Given that one crucial element of Madhyamaka ethics is the breaking down of the 'barrier' between my experience and everyone else's, the Mādhyamika might have a problem with Damasio's thesis. I let the Mādhyamika provide a different treatment of Damasio's thesis.

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# 9

# *MUSHIN* AND FLOW

## An East–West comparative analysis

*Kevin Krein and Jesús Ilundáin*

### 1 Introduction

> He [Musashi] either let fly a real sword or threw a wooden one. But there was no way for either a fleeing or running person to avoid it. Its force was exactly like unleashing the strength of a bow made of stone: one hundred releases, one hundred hits. It cannot be thought that even Yang Yu-chi [a famous archer of the Spring and Autumn Period in China] had a mysterious skill like this.
>
> *Wilson 2004, 47*

> On a bright Saturday morning in September a young man is clinging to the face of Half Dome, a sheer 2,130-foot wall of granite in the heart of Yosemite Valley. [...] Alex Honnold is attempting something no one has ever tried before: to climb the Regular Northwest Face route on Half Dome without a rope. [...] For two hours and 45 minutes Honnold has been in the zone, flawlessly performing hundreds of precise athletic moves one after another, and not once has he hesitated. In the sport of free soloing, which means climbing with only a powdery chalk bag and rock shoes—no rope, no gear, nothing to keep you stuck to the stone but your own belief and ability—doubt is dangerous. If Honnold's fingertips can't hold, or if he merely believes his fingertips can't hold, he will fall to his death.
>
> *Jenkins 2011, 102*

The two situations above are examples of physical achievements that require intensely focused, but also very fluid mental states. The first depicts a warrior in full possession of his powers, no other than Musashi Miyamoto, a complex Japanese swordsman bridging the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who was victorious in 60 deadly duels, author of *The Book of Five Rings*, and an excellent painter and calligrapher. Anyone who has ever sparred will understand how impressive it is that he could survive so many lethal

encounters. The second describes an exploit of Alex Honnold, one of today's most extraordinary climbers. To be able to perform at such a level, when life is literally on the line, requires that the mind and the body move in perfect synchrony and spontaneity, completely focused on the moment.

Eastern accounts often rely on the concept of *mushin* to denote the mental state that allows one to accomplish such feats. In the West, we speak of 'peak performance,' 'flow,' or 'skilful coping' to refer to states in which actors are especially in synch with task and environment, and able to accomplish extremely difficult and complex actions in a seemingly effortless way. How these phenomena and conceptualisations may overlap, or not, is discussed below. Our approach is as follows. Since any comparison will make more sense if the phenomena being compared are better understood, we describe *mushin* and flow in their own cultural contexts. Thus we begin with separate accounts of *mushin* and the Western concepts of peak experiences and skilful performances. After this, we compare their most prominent features in order to determine how similar the experiences are. In particular we ask, are flow or peak performance states the Western counterparts to the state of *mushin*? Our answer walks a subtle and fine line that finds important points of contact as well as definite differences.

## 2 Difficulties with the project

First, however, we address some possible problems with this project. There are plenty of scholarly publications on the topic of flow and peak experiences. But in the case of *mushin*, while the term is commonly found in martial arts texts and used by martial artists, scholarly philosophical analysis of it is difficult to find. This is not surprising given that what is in question is an inner mental state that is reputedly difficult to describe because it consists of No-Mind. All we have are narratives and accounts that indirectly allow us to inductively attribute a special state of mind and body to explain extraordinary performances.

If one wants to study the physical techniques of the martial arts, it is not particularly difficult. We can see a particular technique being performed, perhaps film it and watch it in slow motion, and compare it to similarly observable techniques. Studying a type of mental state is different. We cannot observe it and it is difficult to describe. In a very real way we run into a situation that is reminiscent of Wittgenstein's discussions of sensation 'S' and his 'beetle box,' both meant to exemplify the impossibility of purely private languages. Like Wittgenstein's private linguist who attempts to keep track of a particular feeling by recording a sign in his diary, or the idea of a beetle in a box into which no one can peek,[1] unless we can establish observable criteria for attributing the state of *mushin*, reference to it is extremely problematic. Thus, it may be thought that this project is ill-conceived, that martial artists may make references to inner states, but that they must rely on a kind of faith or mysticism if their claims have any meaning at all.

The same can be said of Western sports. Plenty is said about peak experiences, skilful coping, flow, and being in the zone. But, how do we tell if someone is actually in such a mental state? There seem to be clear cases: top-level athletes who accomplish things that seem almost unthinkable. If they were thinking through each of the moves, it seems that it would not be possible to do what they do. If this is the case, and the athlete describes experiencing things simply happening without effort, we often feel confident saying that they were in the zone or experiencing flow.[2] What about lesser athletes? Any somewhat hip adolescent surfer, snowboarder, or skateboarder may report that he or she was in the zone and experienced oneness with the universe after a mediocre day out. It is simply part of the language of alternative sports subcultures and generally accepted that one of the benefits of these sports is this sort of experience.

It might seem then, that in the great majority of cases, there is simply no way to know whether an athlete or martial artist is experiencing *mushin*. Fortunately, the situation is not as bad as it seems. It is true that talk of *mushin* or flow easily turns into nonsense, or perhaps just meaningless cliché. However, it would be prematurely misguided to think that this issue cannot be overcome.

In terms specific to *mushin*, as we will discuss shortly, the concept is closely related to states of mind found in Zen. In Zen practice, it is very important for teachers to be able to identify students' current mental states on the basis of their behaviour. In the Zen tradition then, there are public signs of relevant inner states—though few can read them. A central tenet of Zen Buddhism is that dharma be passed on directly from teacher to student. In the Rinzai tradition, when a student experiences *kensho*[3] it is sanctioned by the teacher, a significant portion of whose job is to evaluate the depth of understanding and experience of students. Similarly, when a student reaches an appropriate level, a sanctioned teacher may grant him or her permission to teach. In this way, in the Zen tradition there are public criteria for evaluating inner states of this type.

There are comparable cases in the martial arts. Eugen Herrigel, in *Zen in the Art of Archery*, explains that his teacher demanded that he attend only to becoming egoless—to draw, aim and loose the arrow without purpose, simply letting it happen. At a point of frustration after four years of study, Herrigel describes violating this demand of his teacher's in order to improve his accuracy. After observing only two of Herrigel's attempts, the archery master turned away and refused to continue any instruction, because he felt that Herrigel had tried to cheat him. The master only agreed to continue teaching after Herrigel had a friend intervene and make an apology for him. After this episode, Herrigel's training continued for several months without noticeable progress. Suddenly, Herrigel recounts, 'one day, after a shot the master made a deep bow and broke off the lesson. 'Just then, it shot!' he cried, as I stared at him bewildered. And when I at last understood what he meant, I couldn't suppress a sudden whoop of delight' (Herrigel 1999, 52). So, martial arts teachers also, at times, read the mental states of their students in their observable actions.

But in most cases, what is most clearly seen in martial arts is the practitioners' ability to perform certain skills, whether they be in *kata*, sparring, or self-defence related. In general, the question is simply whether or not the practitioner can perform a technique well. Talk of *mushin* comes into play because it is claimed that in order to perform at our best, we must have an empty mind; thought gets in the way of action. In the martial arts, it is commonly claimed that when performing a *kata* we know well, it feels like it is just happening rather than being performed. Similarly, in sparring it often seems as if we simply act, only later consciously processing what our action was. But beyond observing a student's ability to perform, there is no set way to assess a student's mental state in most martial arts.

Our solution is to focus only on the most authoritative accounts of *mushin* rather than to attend to the many descriptions of martial artists. Specifically, we rely on Yagyu Munenori and Takuan Sōhō. On the Western side of the issue we concentrate solely on athletes at the top of their field, such as climber and BASE jumper Dean Potter, and on respected psychological and philosophical work like Csikszentmihalyi's on flow or Breivik's or Moe's on skilful coping. Although this does not eliminate the difficulties entirely, at the very least, it strengthens our interpretation by anchoring it to more solid foundations. With this, we turn to an account of the concept of *mushin*.

## 3 Historical reflections on *mushin*

As we have noted, simply put, *mushin* literally means 'No-Mind,' from '*mu,*' no, and '*shin,*' mind. *Mu* is the equivalent of the Chinese *wu*, a negative particle whose scope and meaning changes with the noun it modifies, and ranges from the simple 'no' to 'emptiness,' 'void,' 'non-existence,' 'nothingness' and similar concepts with specific context-dependent uses. While the Japanese *shin*, which has its root in its Chinese homonym, is loosely translated as mind it actually encompasses a sort of integrated body/mind.[4]

To delineate what the purportedly unobservable *mushin* is about, we undertake a brief synopsis of how it has historically been viewed in Japanese swordsmanship. This overview, in providing us with a sense for how it evolved and its relationship to Zen, will help us better understand how the concept has developed in the martial arts context in general, and how it compares to concepts in the Western realm of sports.

The centrality of *mushin* in the martial arts is partly due to the fact that much of the historical development of Japanese sword technique occurred in a martial culture highly influenced by Zen Buddhism. Zen was not always a part of the Japanese cultural mindset, however, and it has never been the only form of Buddhism in Japan. It will be important then, to say a few words about how Zen, in particular, came to be associated with Japanese martial philosophy.

Buddhism arrived in Japan in the mid sixth century, and over the next several hundred years significantly influenced the culture of the aristocracy.

Zen, however, did not arrive until the twelfth century. While all forms of Buddhism involve the practice of meditation (*ch'an* in Chinese, *Zen* in Japanese), Zen focuses on it as the predominant aspect of practice. According to Zen, it is through meditation that we may directly experience our true nature and the nature of reality.

The most prominent figure in the introduction of Zen to Japan was the monk Eisai, who travelled to China where he was ordained in the Rinzai tradition. After his return to Japan in 1191, he spent the rest of his life promoting Zen. Eisai's homecoming coincided closely with a significant power shift in Japan. In 1192, Minamoto no Yoritomo established the first shogunate, placing power solidly in the hands of the warrior class. This worked in favour of the newly imported Zen since, as Winston King puts it in *Zen and the Way of the Sword*, 'It almost seems to have been a case of love at first sight between Zen and the new warrior rulers' (King 1993, 4). By the mid thirteenth century, high-ranking officials in the shogunate had begun practicing Zen in earnest.[5] Further, clan leaders sent their retainers to Zen monasteries for training in order to increase their abilities as warriors (see King 1993, 4). From this point forward, Zen was used to help train samurai.

King argues that we should not assume that the Zen training received by samurai would have been, except in exceptional cases, as extensive as that of monks. What could be expected is that Zen training would have improved a person's discipline and ability to perform his or her duty in the face of danger and death. As a professional fighter at a time in which being at war was the common state of affairs, dealing with one's own death was a problem that had to be overcome. This is especially the case because it was central to the samurai *ēthos* that one should be ready to die for one's master at any moment. According to King:

> Primarily and most importantly for the Zen-trained samurai of the warring centuries (1200–1600), the Zen meditation discipline served to strengthen the firmness of that 'inner platform of mental control' on which he sought to stand in time of combat by making it impervious to the shakings of any and all distractions—purely incidental factors, the desire for victory, hunger for fame and fortune, and most especially the fear of death. The samurai's professional hardihood in combat was to be forged into a steely contempt for death by practicing intensive Zen meditation, and by absorbing the Zen teachings about the emptiness of the life–death distinction and the sole reality of living in the present moment of action.
>
> *King 1993, 177*

In addition, it must have been recognised that Zen could help the samurai access a more intuitive side of their character, and that this could help them gain valuable insights in difficult situations (King 1993, 166). But, while there was a close relationship between the samurai character and Zen, the direct

relationship between fighting technique and Zen was not made until over three centuries later.

In the mid sixteenth century, Kamiizumi Nobutsuna built upon the *Kage* (shadow) school of swordsmanship to create what he called the *Shinkage* (new shadow) style. Sugawara Makoto, in the classic, *Lives of the Master Swordsman*, claims that the *Kage* school marks a change in the content of swordsmanship instruction: 'Until the establishment of this school, all theories about martial arts in the medieval ages were based on techniques only. The *Kage* schools pioneered a form of swordsmanship that actively incorporated mental elements into their martial arts theories' (Sugawara 1985, 95). The general principle of the *Kage* style is that by clearing one's own mind, one can reflect the mind of his or her opponent and respond to the opponent's moves and intentions. In the following two generations Nobutsuna's style continued to develop.

In 1563, Yagyu Muneyoshi became Nobutsuna's student[6] and studied with him for the next two years, after which Nobutsuna named Muneyoshi the successor of the style. Muneyoshi further developed the style into what he called the *Yagyu Shinkage* style. Sugawara states that because of the emphasis on the mental and the *Yagyu Shinkage* school's connection with Zen Buddhism, 'other martial arts which later came to bear a spiritual character owe a great deal to the original philosophy of the Shinkage Ryu founded by Nobutsuna' (Sugawara 1985, 96).

While Kamiizumi Nobutsuna and Yagyu Muneyoshi were the first to advocate for an empty mind in swordsmanship, it seemed to be for the specific purpose of being able to sense what the opponent was going to do. If one's mind was occupied in any way it would be impossible to respond to opponents as needed. The technique seemed to be perfected in Muneyoshi's no-sword technique, in which, without a sword, he would face opponents and when they struck, move inside the path of the sword and disarm the opponent by grasping the hilt, or by some accounts even catching the blade between his palms. Such a technique, of course, required expert timing and ability to anticipate an opponent's movement.

It was Muneyoshi's son, however, Munenori, who developed the idea of *mushin* further and did so by explicitly linking swordsmanship to Zen Buddhism. His ideas on the matter were strongly influenced by the Zen priest Takuan Sōhō, who wrote a treatise for him outlining the relationship between Zen and swordsmanship. While Munenori was one of the most respected swordsmen of the period, Takuan was one of the most respected Zen priests. The works of both are considered classics in their respective fields. But just as importantly, because the two were in dialogue with each other, their accounts are particularly useful in comparing the mental states experienced in martial arts to those of Zen practitioners. Here we rely on the accounts given by Takuan and Munenori to define the concept of *mushin*.

## 4 Takuan Sōhō and Yagyu Munenori

Takuan's text, *Mysterious Record of Immovable Wisdom* (*Fudochi Shinmyoroku*)[7] was written in the form of a letter to Munenori sometime around 1630. Munenori wrote *The Life Giving Sword* (*Heiho kadensho*)[8] at roughly the same time. The content of Takuan's letter seems to indicate that it was influenced by prior conversations with Munenori. In turn, Munenori's writings seem to have been shaped by Takuan's letter. Because Takuan and Munenori's texts are closely related in both origin and content, we will discuss them together.

While Takuan's *Mysterious Record of Immovable Wisdom* is focused only on the relationship between Zen and swordsmanship, Munenori's *The Life Giving Sword* casts a wider net, and deals with technique and general philosophy in addition to considering the mental state of the expert swordsman. It is composed of three parts: (1) the killing sword, aimed at swift, decisive attacks that enter the killing range of the opponent; (2) the life giving sword, whose philosophical facet is to bring life either by sparing the attacker or killing the offender to save others, and whose technical facet aims at bringing life to the opponent's blade,[9] thus drawing it into an attack that is deflected and turned against the perpetrator; and (3) no sword (*muto*), mentioned above, which aims to develop the skill to handle a *shinken*-wielding opponent while unarmed, and still retain the option to 'give life.' Here we are interested in only the parts that most readily help us understand the concept of *mushin* and how it was understood by Munenori.

Takuan and Munenori were attempting to explain the relationship between Zen and swordsmanship. In a high-stakes activity in which timing and response mean everything, we must be able to react with perfect immediacy. Both maintain that the ideal state of mind for this is fluidity; we should not engage in any mental activity that would inhibit the fluidity of our actions or slow our responses. Takuan refers to the conscious grasping of any idea or concept as the mind stopping. When the mind stops, fluidity is lost.

Takuan points to the fact that, if we are attacked by ten enemies and allow our mind to stop after parrying any one of the attacks, we cannot continue successfully. As he puts it, 'if the mind stops before any one of these men, though you parry his striking sword, when the next man comes, the right action will have slipped away' (Takuan 1987, 21).[10] This stopping will occur, according to Takuan, if we allow the conceptual mind to try to control the body. On the other hand, if we train correctly, *this* aspect of the conscious mind is not required for action. Takuan explains that when we enter the deepest point in our ability, 'the arms legs and body remember what to do, but the mind does not enter into this at all' (Takuan 1987, 24).

Takuan compares the immediate response required in swordsmanship to the answers given by Zen monks to questions. When asked for example, 'What is the ultimate meaning of Buddhist law?' One may immediately answer, 'A single branch of a flowering plum' or 'The cypress tree in the garden.' The point is that the monk must not think through the answer, but instead, answer

absolutely immediately. As Takuan puts it, there must not be room for a hair to fit between question and answer, the answer must be as immediate as a spark from the striking of a stone. Takuan explains, 'It is not a matter of selecting an answer that is either good or bad. We respect the mind that does not stop' (Takuan 1987, 27). Munenori refers to this as well, explaining, 'On the "Darma battlefield" of Zen questions and answers, even when responding to a single line, the adept answers without the interval that would allow the insertion of a single hair' (Yagyu 2003, 111).

In order to respond immediately in this way, we must not be slowed by any attempt to think through an answer. As well, we must not freeze or pause before responding. Thus we arrive at what Takuan refers to as *mushin* or No-Mind. He explains, 'It is called No-Mind when the mind has neither discrimination nor thought but wanders about the entire body and extends throughout the entire self' (Takuan 1987, 33).

Simply understanding that we should not allow our mind to stop will not allow us to achieve *mushin*. Practically speaking, it is by focused training that we may attain No-Mind. Munenori's comments on training begin with a discussion of internalising techniques:

> When you have exclusively learned the various practices and techniques and made great efforts in disciplined training, there will be actions in your arms, legs, and body but none in your mind; you will have distanced yourself from training, but will not be in opposition to it, and you will have freedom in whatever techniques you perform. You yourself will be unaware of where your mind is, and neither demons not heresies will be able to find it. Training is done for the purpose of reaching this state. With successful training, training falls away. This is the secret principle toward which all Ways progress.
>
> By forgetting about training and casting off your mind, you will be all the more unaware of yourself. The place you come to in this way is the perfection of the Way. At this level, you enter through training and arrive at its very absence.
>
> *Yagyu 2003, 75*

If one continues to train, techniques become engrained to the point that the conscious mind no longer directs our action. In a sense, the training takes over and the mind no longer plays a role. But both Munenori and Takuan point out that as long as one consciously attempts to achieve No-Mind, one will fail, since this attempt itself requires thought; if we think about eliminating the mind, these thoughts themselves will occupy the mind and, in Takuan's terminology, it will stop with them. On the other hand, focused attention on training and technique will eventually lead us to attain No-Mind, 'If one will not think about it, the mind will remove these thoughts by itself and of itself become No-Mind' (Takuan 1987, 34).

Like Takuan, Munenori makes the point that the best way to get rid of thought is to train until all thought is gone. He likens thoughts and attachments to sickness and he says that, 'Sickness will be expelled by abandoning oneself to it, and carrying on in its midst' (Yagyu 2003, 90). The process is a long one, however. Takuan explains, 'If one always approaches the mind in this way, at a later date it will suddenly come to this condition by itself. If one tries to achieve this suddenly, it will never get there' (Takuan 1987, 34).

So we see that *mushin* is achieved through persistent and disciplined training. Can we expand on what *mushin* is? Both Takuan and Munenori claim that the state of *mushin* is the state of our 'ordinary mind' or 'everyday mind.' Munenori says of No-Mind that it, 'is not a state of having no mind at all. It is simply your ordinary mind' (Yagyu 2003, 93). We might be tempted to think then that *mushin* is the relaxed mind of the average person involved in everyday tasks or the mind of a person engaged in a task that does not require conscious direction, e.g., driving a car or tying our shoes. We might imagine the swordsman casually cutting down opponents with seemingly no effort or attention at all.

But this is clearly not the case. The state that Munenori describes is one of a high level of attentiveness. When we consider the no-sword technique of the *Yagyu Shinkage* style, in which we disarm an opponent as he or she strikes, the mental state required is not one that allows for daydreaming or organising a shopping list simultaneously. This is not simply a relaxed state of mind but clearly one that is powerful as well. When one has attained this state of Original Mind, according to Munenori, one is a master of the martial arts (Yagyu 2003, 119).

Within Zen discourse, 'Original Mind' refers to our true self or Buddha nature. This is clearly how Munenori uses the term. He says that, 'What is called the Original Mind is the original face you had before your mother and father were born' (Yagyu 2003, 117). Here he is referring to the koan, attributed to Hui Neng, that asks for our original face. If the state of *mushin* is the state of the Original Mind, the term does not refer to a state of being mentally checked out, mindlessly completing mundane tasks or daydreaming. Instead, it refers to a state in which a person is completely present and experiences heightened vividness and clarity.

Such states are called No-Mind because the self-conscious inner dialogue that accompanies most of our actions is not part of them. As is commonly pointed out, such mind chatter often runs counter to what we are doing—questioning, directing, judging, etc. It is this type of mental activity that often leads the mind to stop or causes a break in focus or gap in action that astute opponents may use to their advantage. As Munenori and Takuan explain however, if there are no gaps of this sort, there will be no opportunity for an opponent to strike.

Considering the full context of their works and of Zen Buddhism in general, a more complete interpretation is that 'ordinary mind' refers to a mind without delusion resulting from conceptualisation. The state experienced when

achieving *mushin* is often equated with the themes of mirroring and reflection. In fact, there is a rich tradition of doing so that goes far back and deep into Buddhism, and which Munenori and many of the great master swordsmen reflect in their writings. Munenori, for example, writes 'The breast of the Man of the Way is like a mirror: it does nothing and is perfectly clear. Thus he has No-Mind, and in all things lacks nothing. This is the ordinary mind. A man who accomplishes everything with this ordinary mind is said to be a master' (Yagyu 2003, 92). One of Munenori's techniques actually bears the name 'The moon on the water and its reflection' (Yagyu 2003, 129). Easily, the mind-as-reflecting-device is the most popular image used to describe *mushin*.

The mind is to become immovable—in the sense that while it reflects reality, it maintains its constant state of emptiness. This state should remain unchanged. In other words, there should be no *suki* (interval of relaxation) where the mind stops—such as staring at the tip of your opponent's sword or pondering what his or her next move may be (Suzuki 1993, 108, 143f.). If there is, the opponent could take advantage of it and you could be killed. The goal is an utterly focused yet fluid mind and body acting as one. The opponent adopts a *jodan* with his sword and you unthinkingly adopt a *yin* stance, bringing your sword back to incite his move, then parry it and counter-cut all in one flowing motion. The key external or public sign of one attaining *mushin* is the ability to react and respond in this fluid way. For Munenori not lingering is essential (Yagyu 2003, 157).

We are now in position to give an overview of *mushin* as Munenori and Takuan define the term and can identify characteristics we see as central phenomenological properties that accompany, or perhaps constitute, *mushin*. Some of these refer to aspects of normal experience that are missing in the state of *mushin*, others are aspects of experience that are enhanced when one is in the state of *mushin*.

Perhaps most obviously, there is a reduced level of explicit self-conscious thought. The mind chatter that often interferes with athletic performance is reduced or is completely gone while one is in a state of *mushin*. As well, there is a lessened or eliminated sense of desire to win, succeed, or to avoid failure. This is true even in the cases in which we face death. The diminished level of self-conscious thought and the lack of desire are closely linked to the fact that, in a state of *mushin*, we are completely absorbed in the immediacy of the task at hand. It is worth noting that the direction of causality relationship between absorption in an activity and lack of conscious thoughts or desires is not clear. It might be the case that, as we become absorbed in an activity, desires cease to intrude and distract our focus. It may also be that, as we learn to eliminate self-conscious thought, through classic meditation, or perhaps intense repetitive training, we learn to focus more readily. Or, of course, some combination of the above two possibilities may be obtained. From the Zen point of view taken by Takuan and Munenori, this loss of desire and self-conscious thought is perhaps the most significant aspect of *mushin* because it most clearly indicates a loss of ego or self. To add to this, at times

there is also the feeling that, rather than making things happen or directing our actions, we simply allow movements to occur or events to unfold of their own accord. Phenomenologically, the conscious ego, which we usually experience as directing our actions, no longer seems to be controlling them.

The other three characteristics of *mushin* are aspects of normal conscious experience and ability that seem to be enhanced. There is an increase in fluidity and creativity, an increase in the vividness and clarity of experience, and finally, there is an increase in level of performance.

## 5 Zen and *mushin*

Before turning to a discussion of the Western conception of flow, we are also going to consider the relationship between the experiences of *mushin* and Zen in more detail. This is important because Takuan and Munenori both understand *mushin* to be closely related, if not identical to, a Zen state. It follows that an adequate account of *mushin* must address the question of how it is similar to, and different from, the state of No-Self experienced by Zen practitioners.

It is unfortunate that Takuan does not directly address the question of the relationship between *kensho* or *satori*, and *mushin*. One would expect a Zen priest to put more emphasis on awakening. In their introduction to Takuan's writings in their anthology, *The Roaring Stream*, Nelson Forster and Jack Shoemaker comment that Takuan's writings on swordsmanship, 'dwell on issues of mental and physical condition that Ch'an and Zen masters classically have dismissed as, at best, secondary to awakening' (Forster and Shoemaker 1996, 276). The possible explanation they propose for this is that 'Takuan may have accepted an explicit discussion of condition and technique as the price of doing business with swordfighters, as a skilful means of teaching Yagyu and others in the field' (Forster and Shoemaker 1996, 276).

An alternative and more satisfying explanation is provided by Dennis Lishka who argues that Takuan is best understood not as trying to explain what *mushin* is but as trying to show how it works in a context familiar to the group he is addressing, in this case swordsmen. Swordsmen who could cultivate *mushin* would be successful because they could have a direct experience of reality and escape delusion. They would act in a fluid way and respond directly and creatively. This is true, Lishka points out, of all of the Zen art forms, as he puts it, 'mastery of an art form came to mean total freedom, creativity, and beauty within the context of the form' (Lishka 1978, 145). So, within the context of swordsmanship, Munenori maintains a creative state of freedom from his ego.

On this interpretation, Takuan doesn't dismiss the experience of swordsmanship, but takes it to be a legitimate way to free oneself from delusion. Ultimately, Takuan explains of the expert swordsman, 'He does not put his mind in his adversary. The opponent is emptiness. I am emptiness. The hand that holds the sword, the sword itself, is emptiness. Understand this, but do not let your mind be taken by emptiness' (Takuan 1987, 37).

If we think of *mushin* as awakened emptiness, then it can act as the *ha*, the blade's edge: the more we hone it, the better it can cut asunder attachments, discrimination, and the yoke of reality. This results in freedom from dependence on the conscious mind that gives rise to egocentricity, desire, and fear. Emptied from these encumbrances, the void becomes a free and creative 'space' for the body/mind. Awakened from the bondage of the self, we can look death in the face while appreciating life as both precious and fleeting, feeling the eternity of the present ephemeral moment. Citing Tsunetomo's *Hagakure* in this context, Suzuki states, 'all things are accomplished when one attains a mind of "No-Mind-ness" [...] a state no more troubled with the questions of death or of immortality' (Suzuki 1993, 74).

That is not to say, however, that swordsmanship is complete in itself. There is a significant difference between Munenori, the master swordsman and Takuan, the Zen master. While the swordsman has achieved *mushin* in the context of his art, and may experience deadly competitions without thought or attachment, ideally the Zen master experiences all aspects of life in such a way. Thus, Munenori can say that the person who accomplishes everything with the ordinary mind is a master. We can expect the Zen master to have the type of mental fluidity that accompanies *mushin* in a wider variety of situations.[11] Lishka claims that there is a wider application of ability that differentiates the Zen master from the martial artist, tea master, musician, and so on:[12]

> This is the fundamental difference between a true Ch'an or Zen master, on the one hand, and someone who practices a specific discipline in which he attempts realisation for the purpose of functioning creatively within that context, on the other. The artist has as his context the creative process of his art, whereas the Ch'an or Zen master has as his context living itself—the context for all possible contexts.
>
> *Lishka 1978, 151*

So, while the swordsman may experience some aspects of reality in a way that is free of delusion, we can expect that the enlightened Zen master's training allows him or her to experience more of reality in such a way. It is fair to say, as well, that we could expect the Zen master, in virtue of this, to have deeper insight into the nature of self and reality within the broader context of Zen.

If we take Takuan and Munenori's understanding of the experience of the martial arts to be accurate, the experience of No-Self in action is comparable to that of the Zen master, but limited in context. Both parts of this are significant. It is a strong claim to say that martial artists share the experience of *mushin* with Zen practitioners. But it is also significant that while the limited context of martial arts may not affect the depth of the martial artists' experience of reality the breadth of that experience must necessarily be limited.

While Lishka provides an analysis of Takuan's attitude toward and treatment of *mushin* in swordsmanship, it does leave one significant question unanswered. Given that koan study leading to *kensho* plays such a significant role in Rinzai

Zen, we certainly should ask if there is a counterpart in swordsmanship training. On the surface, it does not seem that swordsmanship, as Munenori describes it, has any aspects that function as koan do in Zen training. At the same time, as pointed out above, Takuan takes it seriously as a Zen practice. We do not have a final answer to this question, but some suggestions follow. The first is that swordsmanship itself is a kind of koan practice. Suzuki seems to argue for a line similar to this when he claims that:

> What makes swordsmanship come closer to Zen than any other art that has developed in Japan is that it involves the problem of death in the most immediately threatening manner. If the man makes one false movement he is doomed forever, and he has no time for conceptualisation or calculated acts. Everything he does must come right out of his inner mechanism, which is not under the control of consciousness. He must act instinctually and not intellectually.
>
> *Suzuki 1993, 182*

If Suzuki is right about this, swordsmanship forces us to cast off the ego and to allow our Original Mind to come to the fore. Of course, it will take intensive practice and time before students of swordsmanship will be successful in this, but it seems like the mechanism is in place to bring this about. The function of facing life and death situations (even in the mock sense of training in the dojo) is similar to that of koan practice in that it brings about a situation in which one can experience his or her Original Mind.

A second possible answer is that martial arts training is closely related to Zen practice in the Soto style, which sees enlightenment as a gradual process and puts less emphasis on sudden flashes of insight. If this is the case, rather than martial artists anticipating to be changed forever by a sudden glimpse of enlightenment, they can expect to—over many years—be better and more capable of seeing the true nature of things and their own Original Mind. While Takuan himself was a priest in the Rinzai sect of Zen, he could also have been expected to see the insight gained in this way as genuine.

A third possible answer is that, given that Munenori was a Zen student as well as a martial artist, both Takuan and Munenori saw Zen and sword training as being complementary. Takuan asserts that, 'even though you may wield the sword that you carry with you well, if you are unclear about the deepest aspects of principle, you will likely fall short of proficiency' (Takuan 1987, 25). He continues, saying that technique and principle are like two wheels of a cart. By 'principle,' in this case, he seems to refer to an understanding of *mushin*. If this is the case, training in both Zen and swordsmanship can supplement each other, and Takuan's letter explains why this is the case. We should keep in mind, however, that Takuan does not seem to be saying that all Zen students should study martial arts, and that it is unclear what his attitude is toward serious martial artists who do not also practice Zen.[13]

There are arguments in favour of all of the interpretations above. Unfortunately, however, there is not adequate space in this chapter to do justice to them. It is clear from the above discussion that for a martial artist the ability to attain *mushin* (whether obtained through traditional Zen or martial arts practice) may lead to becoming an artist of the sword (or any martial art or craft). That is, not just a master, but a *kensei*: a sword saint who practices not the killing sword, but the life giving sword. The mere technician has to kill to defend himself; the true master, the artist of the sword, handles the opponent with subtlety and finesse. Technique alone won't do, one also needs creativity to turn the *ai-uchi* (mutual killing) into *ai-nuki* (a draw)—a sign of excellence and maximum achievement (Suzuki 1993, 169, 171–172, 180).

Before moving to a discussion of Western accounts of similar states, it is worth noting that the concept of *mushin* goes beyond the martial arts, as it is a key element in all of the classic Japanese arts. *Ikebana* (flower arrangement), *chado* (tea ceremony), garden design, painting, and others are all *dō* (ways, or spiritual paths) undertaken as lifelong commitments. They explicitly include the discipline and practice that bring out *mushin*. Renowned swordsmith Kawachi Kunihira inscribed in the tang of a commissioned katana 'discipline your mind with this sword,' which inlaid his feelings as family motto for himself and his descendants (Kawachi and Manabe 2006, 27). For master potter Soetsu Yanagi the key to developing our intuitive potential was in practicing the Zen state of *mushin* (Mimura 1994). In theatre, Zeami Motoyiko codified in the fourteenth century the theoretical underpinnings of Japanese *Noh* theatre, and was the first to apply this term to a genre of literature (McKinnon 1953, 212, fn. 46). The importance of *mushin* in his conceptualisation of how acting is, more than merely entertainment, a way to help the audience transcend their egos and connect with the Universal is widely echoed. (Nearman 1984; Ortolani 1972; Raz 1976). *Buto* (dance of darkness) originated in the 1950s and 1960s with Japanese enfant terrible Hijikata Tatsumi and his shocking performances. On this Sanders writes, 'a buto performance may be said to exist in *mu no basho*, a place of nothingness, where *mushin* (No-Mind) prevails' (Sanders 1988, 159). This amply demonstrates how *mushin* ranges over the whole landscape of Japanese arts in meaningful, deep ways. Now it is time to see whether it ranges across the West.

## 6 Flow and peak experiences

In the West there are a number of related notions that purportedly are associated with similar phenomena to those we have discussed in connection with *mushin*. We will explain these before we proceed to a comparative analysis. Flow, peak performances and experiences or, more vernacularly, 'being in the zone' are some of these. We include peak performances with the caveat that these be understood as particular instances when one has achieved a personal best or record, and not be used to refer to frequent, regular optimal states.[14] For the sake of convenience, in this section we use the concept of 'flow' to encompass

all of these. The preliminary account of flow we give below reflects Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's account on the phenomenon as presented in his work *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (Csikszentmihalyi 2008).

Succinctly put, flow refers to a subjective optimal experience. It is a state of consciousness that is intrinsically rewarding, and whereby we are completely absorbed in the task at hand while performing seemingly effortlessly. According to Csikszentmihalyi, a key to achieving a state of flow is balancing our skills with the present challenge as defined by specific rules. Modern *kendō*, for example, can present opportunities to experience flow. In *kendō*, the rules limit us to use a bamboo *shinai* and protective equipment, allow certain hits and blocks to specific body parts, and specify a starting time for the bout. When we confront an opponent who is evenly matched with us or slightly better, ideally, we become engaged fully in it as we try to find openings. On the other side, if we are under or overmatched, this engagement is compromised as we become either bored, or anxious and scared correspondingly. Because of this, flow is a dynamic phenomenon that aligns on a continuum from 'lower' or simpler flow states to higher, more complex ones: as our skills are refined and we are able to encounter bigger challenges, the intensity of the experience increases.

Current psychological literature distinguishes nine characteristics present in flow experiences.[15] While these are not jointly necessary, most of them are typically present in paradigmatic cases of flow, with the higher instantiations of flow eliciting all nine to some degree. We group these in three subcategories based on conceptual overlaps.

The first subgroup is concerned with procedural facets that make the experience possible. In other words, they are structural constraints. First, we need to have a clear goal for the activity, if only for the obvious reason that it provides purpose and direction. We do not simply swing our arms around, but try to perform a series of concatenated moves in a *kata*. Second, immediate and clear feedback allows us to ascertain how well we are performing and make adjustments. Third, challenges and skills are in equilibrium. The surfer is generally at her best when she rides waves suited to her ability. These three are common to all flow experiences.

The second subcategory includes four other characteristics. These are concerned with perceptual aspects: they are experiential or marked by clear phenomenal qualities of the experience itself. This particular subset manifests the clearest overlap with states of *mushin*. Hence, as a fourth characteristic, we find action and awareness merging. We become one with the activity, or rather, phenomenologically, we *are* the activity. Intricately connected, the fifth characteristic entails concentration, and it specifies that only the here and now exists in our awareness, as we are totally invested in skilfully coping in (with) the present moment. The sixth characteristic, a corollary of the two previous ones, is the disappearance of self-consciousness, which is a natural point of contact with No-Mind states. Our self-awareness and ego take a backseat to the enactment of balanced skills and challenges. All of this results in the seventh feature, a sense of being in control. The eighth characteristic

finds our sense of time distorted, sometimes experiencing the activity in slow motion or at other times speeding things up. We place the ninth element, autotelicity, in a category of its own. It refers to the intrinsic, non-instrumental enjoyment of any given activity for itself. The activity becomes its own end. The preceding elements result in this autotelic attitude where we enjoy aikido for itself, not because of the nice uniforms, the status we associate with skilled *aikidōkas*, or the self-defence skills we gain.

Csikszentmihalyi does consider the martial arts *vis-à-vis* flow. While he acknowledges that in the East there is a larger concern with the mental and spiritual improvement of the practitioner, he quickly concludes that, 'it seems appropriate to think of the martial arts as a specific form of flow' (Csikszentmihalyi 2008, 106). Interestingly, what drives him to conclude this is the joyous artistic performance where body and mind transform into a 'harmonious one-pointedness of mind' (Csikszentmihalyi 2008, 106). This lends itself to be interpreted as an instance of *mushin*.

When we compare *mushin* and flow, the two seem to be very similar at first glance. But as soon as we start to look at the listed characteristics, differences arise. While swordsmanship does have a clear goal, the other two characteristics that serve as preconditions of flow are not mentioned by Takuan or Munenori, nor do they seem to have a clear application in the context of swordsmanship. In swordsmanship, or any martial art, it is important to begin a match in the state of *mushin*, rather than have it arise in response to feedback. Additionally, the ability of our opponent does not have the same sway it does in sports in which there is more time to adjust. That is, we can imagine a martial artist who is simply not as fast or as powerful as an opponent (perhaps because of advanced age) but who would still be able to maintain a state of *mushin* as needed, even when circumstances are not conducive to doing so. Because of the nature of the martial arts, training requires us to be able to adopt a state of *mushin*, rather than having it simply arise when the right conditions are obtained. Even if this is the case, however, the state of *mushin* itself may be similar to flow, with the main difference being how the state arises.

Indeed, the other characteristics seem to apply to both *mushin* and flow. The characteristics of flow include a merging of action and awareness, a full concentration on the present time, place and activity, and a loss of self-consciousness. These characteristics are clearly shared with *mushin*. Csikszentmihalyi also mentions a distortion of the experience of time. While we did not explicitly mention this characteristic in our list of characteristics of *mushin*, as described by Takuan and Munenori, it is not difficult to see it as a part of *mushin*. Autotelicity is clearly described by Munenori and Takuan as the lack of concern over winning and losing.

There are further questions to consider, however, before concluding that *mushin* and flow-like states are the same type of experience. We turn next to recent work by Western philosophers in the area of skilful coping—philosophical analysis of how experts perform tasks—that we see as relevant to our comparison. After this, we will turn finally, to a consideration of how the

difference in cultural context may influence the qualitative experience of both *mushin* and flow.

## 7 Skilful coping in sport

Recent work has resulted from philosophers arguing that traditional cognitivist theories of behaviour fail to account for the way experts work within their fields, skilfully coping with issues as they arise. While our purpose is not to argue for or against cognitivism, or any other broad approach to explaining behaviour, we feel that work in this area is directed toward at least some of the same phenomena that Munenori and Takuan were addressing. Thus, consideration of this work may help us understand aspects that *mushin* has in common with other mental states in which experts navigate complex situations over which they have mastery.

Cognitivist theories of behaviour explain actions in terms of mental processes analogous to those of computer programs that follow rules in discrete steps. Schmidt and colleagues, for example, argue for a higher order executive level that directs output at a lower level that follows a three-step process: stimulus identification, determination of the response, and motor organisation based on action chosen.[16] For instance, a novice learning to hold a katana is given a set of rules that she strives to follow: align the knuckles with the sides of the handle (*tsuka*), no thumbs on top, keep the hand about an inch from the guard (*tsuba*), and when cutting, squeeze the hands inward to keep the edge aligned. These are understood propositionally, that is, in terms of meaningful sentences, and 'archived.' Critics of cognitivism point out that these types of accounts neither represent the experiences of high-level athletes (and in many ways contradict them), nor provide a satisfactory explanation of non-conscious activity that would make such action possible. No expert with a sword follows *any* of the steps described above (or more complex ones) in a conscious way. Further, it is difficult to see how discrete rules of the sort mentioned above could underlie or explain the complex techniques of expert athletes.

As we have discussed here, skilled athletes who are immersed in their sports, and those acting in states of *mushin*, do not rely on conscious rule following. Because classical cognitivism makes the operation of the system a deliberate process, it has developed a theory of automatisation to deal with this: rules and representations recede into the background and are called forth when needed. But, this is far from satisfactory. After all, it is not clear just how these rules are explicitly available on command and with the requisite speed when the need arises. An unexpected turn of events, such as unforeseen blue ice in an extreme ski descent or a surprisingly slippery grip on a sword handle require immediate response that implements the 'basic' steps. On the cognitivist model, we need to consciously recall the pertinent bit of information instantaneously while explicitly running through our repository of representations. The timing and mechanics fail to add up. The recall of the basic skills such as flex the knees, drop the hips to lower the centre of gravity, or purposely hold the grip, are

overtly implemented. But, neither skier nor swordsman go through a mental checklist—else they will *soon* find out how hard the snowpack is or see the blade fly away.

Breivik and Moe build their respective accounts of skilful performances via corresponding critiques of Dreyfus' phenomenological and Searle's logical criticisms of cognitivism and their alternate views.[17] This allows us to cut through two layers of arguments in one stroke. Conveniently, but not surprisingly, both of their critiques concern highly skilled performances, and lead us to the doorstep of *mushin*.

To look at the phenomenological facet first, Dreyfus appeals to what he calls an absorbed coping to explain both expert and 'mundane' abilities that happen automatically. Absorbed coping is a state in which we manoeuvre around a room or climb a cliff but do not explicitly follow directions in a conscious way. Breivik contends that commonplace and extraordinary performances share a level of automatic, non-aware responsiveness, but that the latter are much harder to come by, and concludes that Dreyfus puts 'too much weight on the nonconscious and masterful ways of our dealing with the world' (Breivik 2007, 124–125) in mundane activities.[18] For Breivik, the weakness in Dreyfus' model (this applies to cognitivism and Searle) is that it assumes that one is either consciously deliberating or mindlessly coping. Breivik maintains that if we pay attention to our experience, we continuously shift between the two modes in quite a natural way (Breivik 2007, 129). There are cases and much evidence for actions that perform themselves, as reflected in samurai lore or the accounts of athletes, but Breivik's sources also show cases of deliberate attention. He cites accounts by ultramarathoner Berd Heinrich and skier Aksel Lund Svindal that showcase both, a heightened awareness redolent of Takuan's attentiveness as they describe the many and minute conscious adjustments they make while competing, as well as the monk's No-Mind when they echo automatised reactions (Breivik 2007, 129–130).[19] But even in the cases of automatised responses, he concludes, they generally develop in a gradual way (akin to Takuan's training process) becoming less and less consciously deliberate (Breivik 2007, 131). The issue is not that athletes or martial artists are always or primarily conscious, but that the process of skilful performance requires the capacity for both conscious attention to detail and non-conscious awareness and activity.

Searle's account appeals to a number of technical elements too complex to adequately present here, but with Moe's assistance we get to the core right away.[20] To go back to the slopes—Searle and Moe's example—when a skier is making thousands of adjustments, in what sense can we say these are consciously willed (Moe 2007, 317)? Searle's system relegates this issue to a set of background conditions that are pre-intentional (in the sense of not having a specific content), where an infinite regress of intentions is stopped (Moe 2007, 304). Thus, we form some sort of under-the-radar bedrock where our intentions and voluntary activity stand, but which itself is not characterised by being intentional. That is, there is a sense in which the skier is 'conscious'

of any movements she makes in response to the slope—or else she would not be making them in the first place (this, of course, excludes her mistakes or falls). But there is a sense in which this 'awareness' is not of a deliberative type across the board. It is just that the movements *begin* as conscious at some level.

If Breivik and Moe are right, at the level of high flow or peak performance we are actually more conscious than theorists have supposed. This seems to present a difficulty for our claim that *mushin* and high performance states of Western athletes are closely related. The evidence both Breivik and Moe present and their arguments point to the fact that highly refined performance often *does* require awareness of not just a *gestalt* picture, but even precise and copious discriminations. It does not seem then, that the minds of high-level experts are empty after all.

One possible response is that neither Breivik nor Moe make the strong, but evidently erroneous claim that *all* highly skilled actions require consciousness or intentionality *all* the time across the board. They hold that this awareness is requisite some of the time (Breivik 2007, 130) or that at some point it be traceable to intentional dispositions (Moe 2007, 317). Either way, this is oblique to our concerns here, for we could well argue that *mushin* precisely is in effect in those cases when there is no awareness or when we are closest to that pre-intentional background. But we do not believe this is the case.

We actually think that a subtler consideration of the lessons imparted by the *kenjutsu* manuals and our previous elucidations of no-mindedness show that Takuan and Munenori are on the same page as Breivik and Moe (something we already intimate above). Much of the apparent difficulty is the result of how hard it is to make meaningful cross-cultural translations. The theoretical framework underlying seventeenth century Zen Buddhism and twentieth century philosophy of mind are radically different. The key lies in making clear, in the same language for all, what an 'empty mind' *means* when performed. The cultivation of *mushin* through practice and training techniques as well as deliberate reflection is *about* making certain moves spontaneous and dispensing with distracting thoughts. In other words, whether it be a consummate martial artist or athlete, both have undergone long and arduous hours of practice or training that attune them to being able to: (a) relegate to an unconscious 'bodily wisdom' the myriad, fine tuned movements, rules, and strategies, such that they simply react; (b) ignore irrelevant—as defined by specific circumstances of the fight or competition—perceptions, which include the sensorial (sights, sounds, and proprioceptive sensations) as well as mundane concerns that include any distracting thoughts (about one's mortgage, whether one looks foolish, or may die), such that they can; (c) focus on the moment at hand and be fully there, responding like the moon's reflection on water. The latter is predicated on the previous two. Another way to put it, matching a Western turn of phrase, is to say that because we can relegate worries, techniques, and other distractions to the unconscious, we can thus allow our attention to be filled

with the present moment, and switch perspectives at 'will,' that is, as the need arises.

In both cases, samurai and skier, the trick is not to have a *literally* empty mind akin to a totally unconscious deep sleep or casual mindlessness, but rather not to have stopping points, the opponent's blade and movements or the changing surface of the slope. We do not think about how to grasp the *tsuka* or have any concerns that we will get hurt. This frees us, 'empties' our mind in the sense that our body/mind is fully attuned to the present moment, not missing a ripple on the water—should that ripple be relevant.

It seems then, that the fact that high-level athletes consciously make corrections is not inconsistent with the claim that *mushin* and flow are very similar states. As well, the analysis above supports the stronger claim that the mental states of Western athletes and skilled experts in other fields are analogous to *mushin.*

## 8 Comparative analysis of *mushin* and flow

There is a clear conceptual overlap between flow and *mushin*. To put it pithily, both are dynamic, high performing states of (un)consciousness. But the question is, are these ultimately different qualitatively? That is, as *felt* experiences, do they refer to the same phenomena? We argue that the two types of states share common characteristics, but that key differences in the cultural contexts in which they arise imply that they are experienced as different phenomena such that it would be a mistake to equate them.

Before saying more about the difference between *mushin* and flow, it is worth pausing a moment to consider one sense in which cultural context and interpretation can influence both what something is, and how it is experienced. In order to do this, we turn to two examples. We will then be in a better position to say more about our specific question.

Our first example is part of Arthur Danto's discussion of 'indiscernibles,' art objects that are perceptually indistinguishable but which are different works of art in virtue of the interpretation to which they are tied. In his example, a series of red canvases that share the properties of size, shape, and colour turn out to be, in fact, different artworks. Whether we 'see' one as 'Red Square,' '*Nirvāṇa*,' 'The Israelites Crossing the Red Sea,' or 'Kierkegaard's Mood,' has direct ontological and perceptual consequences: the first is a study in abstraction, the second is steeped in Buddhist metaphysics that echo the ultimately sameness of *Nirvāṇa* and *Samsara*, the third one reflects the fateful moment that damns the Egyptians and saves Moses and his people, and the last one leads us to appreciating an intense psychological study of the Danish philosopher (Danto 1981, 1–3).[21]

Similarly, physically indistinguishable interactions may be of clearly different types. What determines whether a particular movement is an attempt to save someone in the path of a falling object, a reflex, or an attempt to harm the person may be determined by the intentions motivating the action. The

'same sensations' felt in conjunction with the same movements may differ ontologically and qualitatively if one understands, and experiences, them through a Zen Buddhist or a Western lens.

In martial and other Japanese arts, the cultivation of *mushin* is a deliberate undertaking that concurrently is process *and* goal. It is sought as a bodily *and* mental state conducive to spiritual advancement. It is a necessary element in the sense that, if the study of a martial art is to contribute to one's progress toward *satori*, it must be through the increased capacity for *mushin*. That is, whether one is engaged in *zazen*, performing *chado*, or doing *kata*, a state of No-Mind is necessary to elicit the higher states of consciousness that these practices seek. One cannot skip this aspect and be able to demonstrate a master's execution (and feel its corollary experience). Furthermore, there are techniques—integrated into lifelong practice in the best cases—that are developed to instil this state of 'mindful mindlessness.' This is why such arts are said to be about the process of training rather than achievements or results; the process in such instances is itself a reflective practice.

On the other side, flow is contingent and merely indicative in the West, whether it be in 'sportified' martial arts, sports proper, or any of the other activities associated with flow. What matters is achieving the goal of the activity not the experience of flow. It is about beating the opponent, winning the match or game, or conducting a successful surgery that saves the patient. Flow is a very nice and desirable byproduct to experience, but it is neither necessary to perform well or win nor, more importantly, is it explicitly cultivated.

The predominant view sees sports, and martial arts practiced as such, as zero-sum activities where competition is primordial and victory the goal. Zen master Taisen Deshimaru points out, when comparing martial arts as sports and as *dō* (spiritual paths or ways), that the former are fine because 'they train the body and develop stamina and endurance,' but that they are also problematic because 'the spirit of competition that presides over them is not good, it reflects a distorted vision of life. The root of the martial arts is not there' (Deshimaru 1982, 38). True, flow is about the process also, but it is disjointed from the practices themselves and expected to happen on its own. Of course, this does not entail that sports or Western practices are structurally unable to become reflective practices, but currently the focus is on competition not self-development (or rather, the losing of the self!).[22]

Does it follow that *mushin* and flow are different experiences? We argue that it does. Even if it were assumed that the two phenomena begin with the 'same' raw sensations,[23] when they are filtered through Japanese culture, and martial arts conducted under the aegis of a *dō*, the two will differ phenomenologically.

The fact that martial arts underwent a transformation from *jutsu*, warfare techniques, to *dō* under the tutelage of Zen Buddhism had a profound effect. The rich bed of Buddhism, and its emphasis on recognising the illusory nature of the ego or self adds a certain depth to each of the arts that finds no counterpart in the West. If we compare contemporaneous swordsmanship

manuals, none of the Western ones—Vadi, Fiore dei Liberi, or Joachim Meyer—show any inclination for the 'spiritual' development of the practitioner (see Vadi et al 2002; Meyer 2006; Liberi and Charron 2002). To spell things out, *mushin*, as we have seen with Takuan and Munenori, is developed through rigorous training meant to instil spontaneity to one's (re)actions *and* explicit reflection on the process and what it means in the larger framework of Buddhism as vehicle for self-liberation. Here the two wheels of the cart, to echo Takuan, are patent.

This has affected the Japanese understanding of even imported Western sports. Shinobu Abe, writing on Zen and sport, brings a Japanese nuance to this and clarifies what the root of martial arts is about. For him, 'The athlete's motivation [...] is to carry out an activity thoroughly [...] not the desire to do it better than others' (Abe 1986, 47). Revealingly, he concludes: 'the real aim of sport is to develop human nature' (Abe 1986, 48). Correspondingly, Masami Sekine and Takayuki Hata (2011) have recently argued for an understanding of baseball as a martial art in Japan precisely because it is a vehicle of self-cultivation.

To elaborate and clarify from a different perspective, let's consider the loss of self that is advocated by Zen as a remedy to the fear of death. In this context comparing swordsmanship with a Western practice where life is literally on the line, mountain climbing (in any of its varieties), is insightful. The usefulness of Zen for samurai and swordsmen is patent enough. A mind that is empty of 'ordinary' concerns regarding oneself is a mind that can be 'filled' with what matters: the adversary and his movements and sword. In today's world, extreme free soloing (climbing difficult rock or ice without a rope) is unparalleled when it comes to courting a danger that elicits atavistic fear and instinctive responses even in very experienced practitioners. Climber extraordinaire Dean Potter has free soloed then BASE jumped from the Eiger's North Face.[24] One would imagine that if anyone would be inured to dealing with this dread it would be him. Yet he avows, 'that's always been the scariest part of climbing, falling [...] or right when you are gonna fall [...] that would be it, it would be my death.'[25] Stating the obvious for any of us, but quite striking in someone known to walk across a thin piece of nylon webbing thousands of feet high *without* a tether. The point is that even those who do face death on a regular basis, and are the most advanced 'masters' of their sport, fail to overcome the fear of death—and tellingly none of them are Zen masters.

## 9 Concluding remarks

To sum up the above inquiry (and avoid further disquieting ripples): *Mushin* and flow are analogous in terms of mechanics, both allow for an interesting conscious–unconscious dynamic where the mind is imperturbably 'filled' with what matters at the moment. However, our attention to cultural context shows that beneath the quiet, reflecting surface of similarity not all is so undisturbed: Martial *mushin* and athletic flow will, in the long run, acquire different

qualitative properties. The martial artist sees practice as an activity for a lifetime, focuses on self-development, and seeks to explicitly cultivate *mushin* and *analyse* it. No-Mind becomes its own object of reflection, and through this, a different, deeper phenomenon. *Mushin* then, is the central piece of a spiritual practice or project of personal development. The athlete, on the other hand, trains for a particular event or goal, competes to win, and experiences a flowing and special state of consciousness as a side benefit of the performance toward the medal. At the end of the day, the medal is the centrepiece of athletic life and represents athletic superiority and triumph over others. While it is possible to practice martial arts with a focus on winning (in fact many do so), and similarly many engage sport emphasizing process over result, our argument stands that each practice, as structured today, is more likely to either favour the pursuit of victory or the cultivation of self development. Given this, while it is clear that *mushin* and flow share many overlapping characteristics, it is also clear that the experiences of flow in athletic activities and *mushin* in the martial arts differ significantly.

## Notes

1 For the private language argument see his *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 1963), particularly § 243, 258, 261, 270 and 293. He writes: 261. 'What reason have we for calling "S" the sign for a sensation? For "sensation" is a word of our common language, not of one intelligible to me alone. So the use of this word stands in need of a justification which everybody understands [...].' In the case of the beetle in a box, all of us have a box—our consciousness—and our beetle is the content of our experience, our purportedly private thought. But if we are unable to find public, objective criteria to speak about them, the very same word is liable to refer to very different states (or nothing at all) while we mistakenly think it denotes a singular phenomenon. Hence, and in agreement with his insight, we will seek to provide criteria and an operative description of *mushin* and purportedly similar states.
2 Relying on subjective 'confessional' accounts does not solve the issue, since the subjects themselves may not know how to interpret their experience.
3 In Zen Buddhism, *kensho* refers to one's initial experience of one's true nature or self—a first glimpse of enlightenment.
4 The Chinese and Japanese body/mind conglomerate blends bodily and mental, emotional and intellectual facets in contrast to the West's emphasis on rationality. As Carter says, this involves an embodied emotional awareness (Carter 2007, 11).
5 Hojo Tokiyori (1227–1263) and his son Tokimune (1251–1284) are two examples. See Suzuki (1993, 63–65).
6 More precisely, one of Nobutsuna's students defeated Muneyoshi twice. Then Nobutsuna stepped in and Muneyoshi, not able to find an opening to strike, ceded the match and asked to become a student (Sugawara 1985, 98–99).
7 There are several translations of this short but challenging text. To appreciate it better it is advisable to consult more than one. Daisetz Suzuki translates most of it in *Zen and Japanese Culture* (Suzuki 1993). Hiroako Sato also has a commentated translation in *The Sword and The Mind*. Thomas Cleary's translation in *Soul of the Samurai* (Cleary 2005) is annotated. All of our quotations are taken from William Scott Wilson's translation in *The Unfettered Mind: Writings of the Zen Master to the Sword Master* (Takuan 1987).
8 Translations of Yagyu Munenori's *Heiho kadensho* include William Scott Wilson's *The Life Giving Sword* (Yagyu 2003), Sato Hiroaki's *The Word and the Mind*, and Thomas

Cleary's in *Soul of the Samurai* (Cleary 2005). Our quotations are taken from Wilson's 2003 translation.

9 See pages 43–45 of Wilson's introduction to his translation of *The Life Giving Sword* (Yagyu 2003).

10 This may be particularly relevant to Munenori, who reputedly cut down seven attackers in a flurry while protecting the Shogun from a surprise attack during the Summer Campaign in the siege of Osaka Castle (Sugawara 1985, 127).

11 Lishka points out that there have been many Zen masters who, with very limited experience in a particular artistic field, have produced works of 'striking creativity.' He explains that: The reason they could do so was not that they had realised the equivalency of elements within a limited situation of artistic creativity, but that their realisation (Japanese, *satori*) of Buddhist reality enabled them to see the equivalency of elements within any life situation, whether artistic, moral, or soteriological (Lishka 1978, 150–151).

12 This 'enhanced' ability to be creative is plausible in the arts. Where sheer physical prowess is needed, the Zen master would not be abreast. Of course, the Zen master may also be in a better position to make faster gains were he or she to train, all other things being equal.

13 It is worth mentioning that the nineteenth century sword master Yamaoka Tesshu, who was a Zen student as well, had a training ritual for his advanced students that appears to explicitly function much like *koan* training during *seishin* (Zen retreats involving intensive meditation schedules). Tesshu's termed his method *seigan* ('vow,' in Buddhist discourse often referring to the vow of the Buddha to attain enlightenment). Tesshu's *seigan* for the most advanced students consisted in them participating in 200 matches a day, one after another, for up to seven days. Students reported getting to a point of near exhaustion, then having a breakthrough after which they felt exhilarated, renewed, and ready to die. At that point, as Tesshu perceived the student had 'realised the sword of no-sword,' he would halt the training. This can be considered a fourth option as well, that sword training can be adapted to have more of the characteristics of Zen training.

14 While peak experiences may be structurally and phenomenally the same as flow experiences, in virtue of being a 'peak' they are not strictly synonymous. When they overlap experientially, what we discuss below will apply, and when they differ, this would have to be determined on a case-by-case basis, something beyond the scope of this inquiry.

15 We have reorganised and categorised these to fit our purposes. For the original exposition, see Csikszentmihalyi (2008, 48–70). For another treatment also cited in the literature refer to Csikszentmihalyi (1997, 111–123).

16 For a critical examination of Schmidt, see Moe (2005, 159–160).

17 Hubert Dreyfus and John Searle are the most well-known mainstream philosophers to criticise cognitivism. While their critiques are significantly different, both argue that cognitivism problematically entails that we process a countless number of items of discrete information, and further that cognitivists fail to account for a rich interpretive background or the neurophysiological processes *as* biological facts. For an application of these views to explanations of behaviour in sports, see Moe (2005) and Breivik (2007). Breivik, while sympathetic to Dreyfus' views, levies a number of issues against his phenomenological account, e.g., that although Dreyfus expands on Heidegger's insights regarding the use of tools and objects, he overreaches in attributing these to Heidegger. Breivik develops a much more refined critique of absorbed coping that space prevents us from including here; for Searle, see Moe (2007).

18 We think that it is a mistake to equate commonplace mindless activity with the state of *mushin*, as we argue above. We focus here only on Breivik's comments on high-level sports activity.

19 Breivik's examples perceptively cover both extremes: a long event with much time to think, and a quick, explosive one.

20 Moe (2007) develops a very clear and meticulous examination of Searle's intricate position, which includes an account of intentionality, and Searle's notions of the 'Network,' and 'Background,' as well as his 'Connection Principle.' For a discussion of the ideas here reflected see (Moe 2007, 304–306, 312–317) especially. Moe concludes that Searle's schema is quite helpful when it comes to providing an 'internal' perspective, but comes up short in his neurophysiological account (Moe 2007, 318).
21 Danto develops these ideas in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Danto 1981), as well as in his article 'The Artworld' (Danto 1964).
22 There are other alternative views of sport as process and competition not as zero-sum but collaborative. But these are not the prevalent ones. Incidentally, these alternative views would be congruent, should flow and process be cultivated, with the role of *mushin* in Eastern practices. For a perspective on some of the views of rock climbers, including Dean Potter who we discuss here, see the short film *The Race for the Nose of El Capitan*: http://www.outsidetelevision.com/video/race-nose-el-capitan (Rosen and Mortimer 2011). Accessed December 31, 2013. Also, for a selection of high-level alternative sports athletes short comments on flow in their sports, see the short video *Flow 101: The Rise of Superman Episode 1*: www.outsidetelevision.com/video/flow-101-rise-superman-episode-1 (Kotler 2013), accessed December 31, 2013. It is interesting that these alternative sports fall somewhere in between competitive traditional sports in which winning is central, and martial arts in which self-cultivation and/or spiritual development are primary.
23 We are not advocating for the claim that there are such raw sensations, experienced in a completely unmediated way. There are deep issues with any such claims. We make this claim here, for the sake of making a particular sort of argument. If, in fact a framework of interpretation mediates all sensations, our argument is more clearly correct.
24 The Eiger's North Face is a legendary climb in the Swiss Alps. For a classic account of early attempts on the face see Harrer's *The White Spider* (Harrer 1998).
25 In *Eiger, Unroped*, a short hair-raising video of Dean Potter soloing the Eiger that literally ends on a cliff hanger, www.outsideonline.com/featured-videos/adventure-videos/climbing/123861004.html. Accessed December 31, 2013.

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# PART III

# Buddhism and other Asian philosophical traditions

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# 10

# *AHIṂSĀ*, BUDDHISM, AND THE MARTIAL ARTS

## A soteriological consequentialist approach to understanding violence in martial practice

*Richard Schubert*

### 1 Violence and the martial arts

While traditional Asian martial arts have their roots in a number of classical Asian philosophies, perhaps none of these is as widely recognised as Buddhism. Yet the fact that many traditional Asian martial arts are rooted in Buddhism seems perplexing.[1] The martial arts appear to be violent and their violence appears incompatible with the Buddhist emphasis on *ahiṃsā* (roughly, 'avoiding harm').[2] There have been numerous attempts to reconcile violence in the martial arts with Buddhist ethics (for a recent example, see Mortensen 2010). Some of these deny that the martial arts (or at least, the martial arts properly practiced) are violent. Others deny that Buddhism prohibits violence, or at least, that Buddhism prohibits the kind of violence that takes place in the course of proper practice of the martial arts. Attempts of the former variety generally seek to resolve the problem while remaining largely neutral as to the appropriate interpretation of Buddhist ethics, while attempts of the latter variety generally appeal to some purportedly correct interpretation of such ethics.

In what follows, I'll briefly sketch what I take to be the two most promising of the moral-theoretically neutral attempts to reconcile the apparent violence with Buddhist ethics and explain what I take to be unsatisfactory about them. I'll conclude by suggesting an interpretation of Buddhist ethics as a form of what I will call 'Soteriological Consequentialism' and sketch the resolution of the problem against the backdrop of that interpretation.

Before I begin, a bit of set-up is in order. The first element of that set-up concerns the scope of the present inquiry. The second consists in a treatment of what I see as an overly quick attempt to contend that there is really no philosophical work to be done reconciling Buddhist *ahiṃsā* with the martial arts.

Buddhism is not a monolithic whole and neither are the martial arts. There is both Theravāda Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism and each of these is divided into numerous schools and sects. I will limit myself in what follows to a treatment of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

As regards diversity within the martial arts, it is useful here, as elsewhere in *Philosophy and the Martial Arts*, to avail ourselves of a bit of Japanese technical terminology and distinguish between *bujutsu* (Kanji: 武術), martial arts whose primary aim is battlefield efficacy, and *budō* (Kanji: 武道), martial arts whose primary aim is the self-actualisation of the martial artist.[3] While there are interesting issues regarding violence, and in specific killing, in the context of *bujutsu*, that is, interesting issues regarding just war in the Buddhist tradition, I will not address them here.[4] Instead, I will restrict myself to considering the problem at hand in the context of *dō* and at the level of individual moral responsibility.[5]

With this much in the way of a clarification of the scope of the present inquiry behind us, let us turn to what I see as an overly quick attempt to contend that there's really no philosophical work to be done reconciling Buddhist *ahiṃsā* with the martial arts. The tension between *ahiṃsā* and the violence of the martial arts presents a mere practical problem, this perspective has it, because, seen from a Buddhist-based *dō*-internal standpoint, martial artists are always immoral when they harm. Martial arts practice, properly pursued, is never violent.

The plausibility of this claim hinges, I think, on the appropriate interpretation of 'martial arts practice, properly pursued.' One might wish to claim, for example, that the martial arts, or the martial *dō* at any rate, ultimately aim at non-violence and plenty of authoritative testimony supports this claim.[6] That is, one might wish to contend that the pinnacle of martial practice is violence free.

Even if this is true, however, it is somewhat beside the point. What is at issue is not whether some instances of violence are morally impermissible from a *dō*-internal standpoint, since surely some are; what is at issue is whether *every* instance of violence is morally impermissible from a *dō*-internal standpoint. More carefully, the question is whether a martial artist could ever be violent in the course of the proper practice of his or her *dō*. And it seems to me that he or she could be and, I might add based on my 38 years training and 28 years teaching traditional martial arts, not infrequently is.

It might very well be the case that the range of circumstances in which a martial artist could engage in violence in the course of proper practice narrows as the martial artist progresses until it approaches the limit (say, at the level of a grandmaster), at which point no violence whatsoever would be consistent with proper practice. But, what is vexing is the apparent permissibility below that limit, for ordinary (rather than extraordinarily advanced) martial artists.

It seems to me implausible to maintain of each and every martial artist that she falls beside the Martial Way on each occasion that she is violent. The violence with which we are concerned isn't merely peripheral to the martial

arts or occasional in martial practice, it is frequent. It seems implausible to maintain that all but the most advanced martial artists are some genre of moral Sisyphusians who roll the rock of *ahiṃsā* up the hill at the start of each practice or martial exchange only to have it roll immediately back down over them leaving them bruised by moral failure.

Physical bruises and other minor, as well as major, physical injuries are commonplace in martial practice.[7] But traditional martial arts clearly see ordinary martial practice itself, even among novices who are especially prone to such injuries, as virtuous, rather than vicious. The claim that the harm (e.g. the aforementioned injuries) that is part and parcel of such practice renders it morally tainted isn't plausibly attributed to the martial arts themselves. Martial arts practice is understood from a *dō*-internal standpoint as a means of physical and moral improvement, but this objection would have it be a means of moral degradation on account of what, for the novice at any rate, is unavoidable moral hazard. So much, then, for the contention that there is really no philosophical work to be done reconciling Buddhist *ahiṃsā* with the martial arts.

I do, however, wish to express some sympathy for the general thrust of the view I have just dismissed and in the process further clarify my interests in what follows. It seems to me that martial arts properly practiced are often perceived by those less familiar with them to be more violent than they really are. While martial artists regularly strike, throw, and choke one another in the course of ordinary practice, much of this activity isn't violent in any relevant sense, even if it may appear so to the uninitiated.

Unfortunately, providing a satisfactory account of what violence in the relevant sense is turns out to be extraordinarily difficult. As Michael Jerryson (Jerryson and Juergensmeyer 2010, 6) points out, '*violence* is a slippery term to define, as many astute scholars such as Walter Benjamin, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida have shown' (See also Garver 1968, 817–822). I have thus far glossed violence as 'harm' (just as I have glossed *ahiṃsā* as 'avoiding harm'). However, this gloss is not ultimately satisfactory as there are obvious instances of non-violent harm, such as financial fraud. What is clear is that violence in the relevant sense necessarily involves physical force, but is more than just physical force, as there are non-violent instances of physical force, such as the administration of cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (Betz 1977, 340). For reasons I will offer below, violence isn't plausibly construed as physical force accompanied by the intention to harm either.[8]

The task of explaining what we mean by violence in the relevant sense is complicated to some extent by the context in which we are undertaking it. '*Ahiṃsā*,' can also be translated as 'non-violence' (Keown et al. 2003, 6), but we are attempting to explain how the violence of the martial arts can be reconciled with the emphasis in Buddhist ethics on *ahiṃsā*. So, it won't do, for example, to build moral wrongness into our account of violence (so that violence is conceptually akin to murder, as opposed to killing) or it will be trivially true on conceptual grounds that violence is always morally impermissible.[9] On the

other hand, we must have a working account of violence that explains why it is grounds for moral concern.

*Webster's New International Dictionary* defines 'violence' in one of its primary senses as 'broadly, exertion of any physical force considered with reference to its effect on another than the agent, as in warfare' (Neilson 1948, 2846). But, among other concerns with this definition for present purposes, it would seem inappropriate to restrict our account of violence to action which has another as its object. One can direct violence towards oneself, as in self-mutilation, and some traditional martial arts training practices are at least akin to self-mutilation.[10] There is, however, still something helpful in Webster's suggestion that violence concerns physical force considered by reference to its effect.

To turn to the Buddhist tradition for assistance, the Buddhist text *Anguttara Nikāya* (III. 213 quoted in Harvey 2000, 69) identifies *ahiṃsā* with non-injury and injury seems to be precisely the variety of effect that violence, in the sense with which we are concerned, typically involves. Note, however, that violence need not invariably result in injury. If someone evades an attacker's forceful blow to her throat, we can still appropriately characterise the blow as violent, other things being equal, even though it does no injury in this particular case. We can thus, for present purposes, understand violence to be, roughly speaking, the exertion of physical force that ordinarily results in injury to its object.

We are now in a position to better appreciate why, although I think it implausible to maintain that every instance of violence is morally impermissible from a *do*-internal standpoint, I am sympathetic to the suggestion that the martial arts, properly practiced, are less violent than they are often perceived to be by those less familiar with them.[11] We can, I have suggested, understand violence to be, roughly speaking, the exertion of physical force which ordinarily results in injury to its object. But what is ordinary is context dependent. It is ordinary to see barefoot people openly carrying weapons in a martial arts school, but not ordinary to see barefoot people openly carrying weapons in American suburbs. A moderately hard blow to the stomach is injurious to the typical person on the street, but not, in my experience, to the typical middle-ranking martial artist, who has developed strong abdominal muscles and is conditioned to tense them when receiving a blow. As the violence with which we are concerned is the exertion of physical force which ordinarily results in injury to its object, in the context of martial arts practice, it turns out that much of the striking, throwing, and choking that goes on is not violent, even if it appears to be so to the outsider.[12] Still, significant violence (in the sense we have now clarified) occurs in the context of ordinary martial arts practice, so the task of reconciling that violence with Buddhist ethics remains.

## 2 Moral-theoretically neutral approaches

Let me turn directly, then, to the first of what I take to be the two most promising moral-theoretically neutral attempts to resolve the tension between Buddhism and the martial arts, an attempt that I'll call 'The No-Desire-to-

Harm, No-Violence Approach.' This attempt to reconcile the violence involved in traditional martial practice with the Buddhist valuation of *ahiṃsā* rests upon an account of the content of our concept of violence. A violent act, the account contends, is a particular variety of intentional act which necessarily involves a desire to harm. More specifically, an agent, A, commits an act of violence, V, towards a person, P, by engaging in behaviour, B, if and only if A desires to harm P and desires that P be harmed by B. Since, at least in paradigmatic cases (e.g. cases of proper practice), the martial artist has no desire to harm her opponent (even if she may have other desires, e.g. to do her best in the match, land this particular punch, etc.), she could not possibly perpetrate an act of violence against that opponent regardless of how she behaved.[13]

It seems to me, however, that the conceptual claim upon which this approach to resolving the relevant apparent inconsistency is based is incorrect. It seems to me, for example, that when A beats P to death in order to silence P (say, because A finds P's incessant whistling to be annoying), A perpetrates an act of violence against P, even if we suppose that A, who is completely focused on bringing the whistling to a stop, has no desire to harm P and the harm that does arise as a result of A's behaviour is thus unintentional. In this case, like in the case of the martial artist, it appears that A had no desire to harm P, but rather, a desire for some end to which B was a means under some intentional description other than 'harming A.'

But even if we set my worry about the correctness of the relevant conceptual claim aside and assume that The No-Desire-to-Harm, No-Violence Approach is on firm conceptual footing, the approach does not go far enough in addressing our problem. The Buddhist precepts prohibit all manner of harming, not merely violent harming. And, at bottom, the relevant prohibition is one against the full range of afflictive desire states (*kleśa*) which can accompany harming, not merely those constitutive of a desire to harm.[14] So much then, for The No-Desire-to-Harm, No-Violence Approach. Let's turn to the second moral-theoretically neutral attempt to resolve the tension between Buddhism and the martial arts, which I will call 'The No-Agent, No-Action Approach.'

One might think the problem with The No-Desire-to-Harm, No-Violence Approach is a mere problem of detail, that it simply doesn't go far enough. If a conceptual claim is to be sought as a basis on which to resolve the apparent inconsistency between martial practice and Buddhism, that basis is to be found in the content of the concepts of action and agency themselves. Agency, this approach has it, requires intentionality. Rocks kill all the time when they are dislodged from mountain sides by seismic activity, but no one sees this as a violation of Buddhist ethics. When rocks kill, they do so as a result of their physical movement, but not as a result of intentional action. Perfectly enlightened martial artists, the view goes, are in a relevant sense like rocks. Their physical movements in martial context are as non-intentional. As Allan Bäck (2007) once put it, martial arts masters are 'Zen zombies' empty-mindedly doing without acting. They are not agents in the ordinary sense, they don't perform intentional actions and hence they are not subject to moral evaluation.[15]

The fact that a variety of martial *dō* aim at Empty Mind is certainly well established. (See, for example, Suzuki 1970, 59–214; Stevens 1994, 15–74; Hyams 1979, 85–95; Lynch 2010, 42–44.) However, we might question the appropriateness of invoking an idiosyncratically Zen Buddhist doctrine in response to a problem for all Buddhist-based martial arts. We might also question whether The No-Agent, No-Action Approach rests upon a correct interpretation of the ethical implications of that doctrine in the first place.[16] But we need not detain ourselves with these matters for present purposes. Like The No-Desire-to-Harm, No-Violence Approach, The No-Agent, No-Action Approach, does not go far enough in addressing our present problem.

What is at issue is not whether some truly extraordinary instances of harming are morally permissible from a *dō*-internal standpoint as The No-Agent, No-Action Approach contends they are; what is at issue is whether every instance of harming considered morally permissible from a *dō*-internal standpoint is consistent with Buddhism and if so, how this is to be appropriately understood. Even if we suppose The No-Agent, No-Action Approach to offer a resolution of the relevant apparent tension for the enlightened master—or for the nearly-enlightened martial artist who happens to be acting No-Mindedly in a particular case—the bulk of the relevant problem remains. That is, the question becomes how a less-than-perfectly enlightened martial artist could ever intentionally harm in the course of proper practice of her *dō* given the Buddhist element of that practice. It does seem to me that she could at least under some circumstances, even if not under others. It isn't plausible to maintain of each and every less-than-ideally enlightened practicant that she falls beside the Way on each occasion that she harms. So much for The No-Agent, No-Action Approach. And so much for moral-theoretically neutral attempts to address the problem.

## 3 Soteriological consequentialism

Buddhist ethics is a complicated affair and its appropriate exegesis is highly contentious. Part of the complication and controversy stems from heterogeneity within Buddhism and across Buddhist sects (even within Mahāyāna). What one appropriately takes to be true of Buddhist ethics depends in part upon exactly what sort of Buddhism one has in mind and what texts and traditions one takes to be authoritative within that variety of Buddhism. Aside from these sources of complication, however, controversy stems in large part from the lack of a historically coherent, explicit moral-theoretical framework in Buddhism (Keown 2001, 2; Hayes 2011, 289). Given the Buddha's anti-metaphysical orientation and, once we turn our attention to Mahāyāna Buddhism, reliance on skillful means (teachings and practices of pragmatic value to the practitioner given her current spiritual state, but not necessarily directly indicative of absolute truth), this is far from surprising.[17]

Recent views concerning the appropriate interpretation of Buddhist ethics run the moral-theoretical gamut. Some scholars maintain that Buddhist

ethics is best understood as a variety of virtue theory. (See, for example, Whitehill 2000.) Others maintain that Buddhist ethics is best understood as a variety of deontological theory. (See, for example, Olson 1993.) Still others maintain that Buddhist ethics is best understood as a variety of consequentialism. (See, for example, Goodman 2009; Anuruddha 1972; Malalasekera 1950.) In addition to those willing to characterise Buddhism in these ways, some contend that Buddhism simply cannot be captured using such a Western taxonomy. (See, for example, Hayes 2011, 394–395; Gross 2010, 312–313.)

In the remainder of this chapter, I would like to explore the prospects for understanding violence in Buddhist-based martial practice against the backdrop of what I take to be the best available interpretation of Mahāyāna Buddhist ethics.[18] Happily, that interpretation is also the one that best coheres with the general thrust of the moral instruction I have received in the context of my nearly four decades of traditional Asian martial arts practice, instruction that has been roughly consistent across the six traditional martial arts styles I have studied at some length during that time.

That interpretation, and that instruction, has been consequentialist. As I see it, Mahāyāna Buddhist ethics in general, and the Buddhist ethics reflected in traditional martial arts in specific, is best understood as what I call 'Soteriological Consequentialism.' Soteriological Consequentialism is the view that an action is morally right if and only if it is more conducive to the cessation of all suffering (that is, results in less overall suffering aggregated across all sentient beings) than available alternatives.

We noted above that interpretations of Buddhist ethics run the moral-theoretical gamut. This is, at bottom, I conclude in part on the basis of inference to the best explanation, because texts in the Buddhist canon underdetermine Buddhist moral theory.[19] As a result, as I see it, successful arguments concerning the most appropriate interpretation of Buddhist moral theory aren't, and can't be, simply textual. As I think recent literature amply demonstrates, narrowly textual arguments simply end in merely momentary triumph or stalemate. The alternative to narrowly textual arguments is argument from first principles. And it is just such an argument that I think is persuasive.

Put simply, the argument is this: Mahāyāna Buddhism contends that suffering is of intrinsic disvalue. Salvation, the cessation of suffering, is the maximal diminution of that which is of intrinsic disvalue and thus the ultimate end in Buddhism. Buddhist ethics is thus best understood as a form of Soteriological Consequentialism.

An overarching argument by elimination, supported by detailed ground-level textual argumentation in the recent literature, brings us to a similar conclusion. Insofar as it can be understood by reference to the moral-theoretical categories of Western ethics, Mahāyāna ethics must be a form of deontological theory, virtue theory, or consequentialist theory. Following Charles Goodman (2009, 78–79), we can conclude that it cannot be a form of deontological theory because, as Asaṅga (*Dīgha Nikāya* 30 cited in Goodman 2009, 78) makes clear, the bodhisattva, the morally ideal agent in the context of Mahāyāna Buddhism,

clearly breaks the moral precepts (the only plausible candidates for duties in Buddhism) when the consequences of doing so would be good. Following Paul Williams (2009, 113–137), we can conclude that Mahāyāna ethics cannot be a form of virtue theory because such a theory is inconsistent with the fact that the ultimate goal of Mahāyāna Buddhism is being a Buddha. As Śāntideva (*Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9: 34–38 quoted in Williams 2009, 114–122) makes clear, a Buddha's mind lacks cognitive content, so a Buddha, as Williams (2009, 114) puts it, 'cannot be said to be virtuous' as the virtues require such content. Having eliminated virtue theory and deontological theory, we are left with consequentialism. The only question becomes what kind of consequentialism we should understand Mahāyāna ethics to be.

Rule utilitarianism fails to be a viable candidate for a reason similar to that on the basis of which we rejected deontological theory; the bodhisattva, the morally ideal agent in the context of Mahāyāna Buddhism, clearly breaks the moral precepts (the only plausible candidates for moral rules in Buddhism) when the consequences of doing so would be good.[20] Goodman (2009, 70) has argued that Mahāyāna ethics is a form of character consequentialism, which he defines as 'any consequentialist theory that is based on a twofold theory of well-being that assigns intrinsic value both to happiness and to virtue.' Unfortunately, Williams' argument against the view that Mahāyāna ethics is virtue ethics cuts against character consequentialism as well. As the view that virtue has intrinsic value is inconsistent with Mahāyāna Buddhism, Mahāyāna ethics cannot be a form of character consequentialism any more than it can be a form of virtue theory.

As we are seeking a form of consequentialism and neither rule nor virtue consequentialism will do, we are left with some form of act consequentialism, such as Soteriological Consequentialism. But how, exactly, should we understand Soteriological Consequentialism? Given its essential reference to suffering, to understand the view, we must first understand the relevant notion of suffering, which is in present context of course the Buddhist notion.

## 4 *Dukkha* and soteriological consequentialism

All of Buddhism is built upon the Buddha's central insight, expressed in the Four Noble Truths, concerning the nature of, cause of, and means by which we can eliminate, suffering (*dukkha*). Following Mark Siderits (2007, 18), we can summarise the Four Noble Truths as follows:

1 There is suffering.
2 There is the origination of suffering: suffering comes into existence in dependence on causes.
3 There is the cessation of suffering: all future suffering can be prevented.
4 There is a path to the cessation of suffering.

As Siderits (2007, 19) points out, Buddhism recognises 'three different layers within the notion of suffering, each more subtle than its predecessor: suffering due to pain, suffering due to impermanence, and suffering due to conditions.' As it seems to me the full text of the Four Noble Truths makes clear, suffering due to pain consists in, for example, the suffering of sickness and injury. Suffering due to impermanence (i.e. the fact that nothing in the world, including we ourselves, lasts forever) includes the suffering of not getting what one wants (as what one wants is permanence). Suffering due to conditions amounts to the suffering that results from karma.[21]

Suffering due to pain is thus what we might think of as 'ordinary suffering,' suffering due to impermanence is what we might think of as 'existential suffering' and suffering due to conditions is what we might think of as 'karmic suffering.'[22] Soteriological Consequentialism is thus the view that an action is morally right if and only if it results in less ordinary, karmic, and existential suffering, aggregated across all sentient beings, than available alternatives.

Ordinary suffering is familiar enough to any human being not to require further explanation. Existential suffering is readily explained as it is the suffering that comes with the recognition that life is, as Buddhists see it, in an important sense deeply unsatisfactory because we crave a permanence for ourselves, as well as the other people and things to which we are attached, that is inconsistent with the fundamental metaphysical facts about all people and things: that they are impermanent. What I mean by karmic suffering, however, requires extended explanation.

As Damien Keown (2005, 3) notes, Buddhist ethics is founded on the Dharma, 'a universal law which governs both the physical and moral order of the universe.' As he goes on to explain, 'The doctrine of karma is concerned with the ethical implications of Dharma, in particular those relating to the consequences of moral behavior' (Keown 2005, 5). These consequences depend in specific upon the intentional component of actions. As the Buddha (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* iii. 415 translated in Keown 2005, 5) himself put it, 'It is intention (*cetanā*) [...] that I call karma; having willed one acts through body, speech, or mind.' As Keown explains, as they are understood in Buddhism,

> Moral actions are unlike other actions in that they have both transitive and intransitive effects. The transitive effect is seen in the direct impact moral actions have on others....The intransitive effect [which depends upon the intention of the agent] is seen in the way moral actions affect the agent.
>
> *Keown 2005, 6*

From a Buddhist perspective, just as the physical laws that govern the universe determine the transitive effects when one person punches another, the karmic laws of the universe determine the intransitive effects of the action. Karma is understood in Buddhism to influence an agent's future circumstances, *inter alia*, her future social status, physical appearance, character and personality

(Keown 2005, 6–7). Of course, each of these bears on the extent of her ordinary and existential suffering. Karmic suffering thus consists in the future ordinary and existential suffering a person will experience as a karmic causal result of her present actions given the intentional component of those actions.

We can thus restate Soteriological Consequentialism as the view that an action is morally right if and only if its total transitive and intransitive effects involve less ordinary and existential suffering than available alternatives. That is, an action is morally right if and only if the sum total of ordinary and existential suffering attendant to its (immediate and direct) impact on others and (future indirect) impact on the agent who performs it is less than available alternatives.

## 5 Soteriological consequentialism and *ahiṃsā*

At this point we can return to *ahiṃsā* and clarify its relationship to suffering (*dukkha*) in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The full text of the Fourth Noble Truth, which we have thus far simply summarised (following Siderits) as the claim that 'there is a path to the cessation of suffering' makes reference to the Eightfold Noble Path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditation (Keown 2005, 5). And it is these that are the basis of Buddhist ethics.[23] Right conduct (for lay people, at any rate) becomes identified early in the development of Buddhism with the Five Precepts, the first of which is *ahiṃsā* (Keown 2005, 9).

The word '*ahiṃsā*' is 'formed by adding the negative prefix *a* to the word *himsā*, a derivative from the root *han* meaning "to kill" and "to injure."' (Malalasekera 1961, 287) Theravāda Buddhism sometimes understands *ahiṃsā* in a fairly literal way, thus, for example we find in the Theravāda canon, 'Laying aside violence in respect of all beings [...] he should not kill a living creature, nor cause to kill, nor approve of others killing' (*Sutta-nipāta* 394 quoted in Harvey 2000, 69). However, *ahiṃsā* is also understood within the Theravāda canon to apply more broadly, thus we also find, 'Abandoning onslaught on breathing beings, he abstains from this; without stick or sword, scrupulous, compassionate, trembling for the welfare of all living beings' (*Mahjjhima Nikāya* I.345 quoted in Harvey 2000, 69). In Theravāda Buddhism, as Peter Harvey points out, 'Injuring but not killing a being is clearly against the spirit of the precept, but does not fully break it' (2000, 69). In Buddhism, however, the precept against *ahiṃsā* is Mahāyāna understood even more broadly.

As mentioned above, from the Mahāyāna perspective, the *bodhisattva* is the ideal moral agent. Although the term '*bodhisattva*' literally means 'wisdom being,' as wisdom and compassion are understood in Mahāyāna to be mutually co-arising, the primary characteristic of the *bodhisattva* is her compassion, which she expresses to optimal effect with the benefit of her wisdom (Keown 2001, 160; Harvey 2000, 124). This wisdom allows her to employ 'skillful means' (*upāya*) in her moral decision making, which leads her to understand the spirit of the precepts to require the diminution of suffering by whatever means are

necessary (Harvey 2000, 134). Thus, from the standpoint of Mahāyāna Buddhism, whatever the letter of the precepts, their spirit is broken whenever one fails to be compassionate, that is, to minimise suffering for all sentient beings.

*Entering the Path of Enlightenment* V.84 tells us that 'a *bodhisattva* should always be diligent in the interests of others' (quoted in Keown 2001, 151). But from this, as the continuation of this passage makes clear, it follows that 'even what is forbidden is allowable for one who seeks the welfare of others with compassion' (quoted in Keown 2001, 151). As David B. Gray (2007, 242–243) puts it, 'the Bodhisattva's goal is to act so as to maximise benefit for all involved, but because these decisions to act are purely contextual, it is not possible to adequately formulate ethical rules that would apply to all situations.'

The *Summary of the Mahāyāna* VI.3 tells us that '*bodhisattvas* can perform and carry out any bodily vocal or mental act (*kāyavāgmanaskarma*) favourable for beings (*sattvopakāraka*) provided it is irreproachable (*niravadya*)' (quoted in Keown 2001, 147). The commentaries explain that an act is irreproachable when it 'assures the welfare (*hita*) and happiness (*sukkah*) of beings without thereby arousing the passions such as greed, etc. (*rāgādikleśa*), either in oneself or in another' (quoted in Keown 2001, 147). *Bodhisattva-bhumi* tells us that 'If the *bodhisattva* sees that some caustic means, some use of severity would be of benefit to sentient beings, and does not employ it in order to guard against unhappiness, he is possessed of fault' (Tatz 1986, 74, quoted in Goodman 2009, 78).

This applies to, among other things, *ahiṃsā*. Violence, and even killing, is morally permissible according to various Mahāyāna Buddhist texts when it is suitably compassionate. Perhaps most famously, the *Upāya-kauśalya Sūtra* tell us that in a past life, the Buddha himself, then a *bodhisattva* and a sea captain named 'Mahākaruṇika' ('Greatly Compassionate'), killed a robber intent on killing, and stealing from, his fellow passengers (cited in Harvey 2000, 134; Gray 2007, 242–243).

The details of this case are of particular interest to us in the present context. As the *Upāya-kauśalya Sūtra* describes it, Mahākaruṇika had only three choices in his particular situation: he could do nothing, allowing the homicidal thief to kill the other passengers; he could inform the other passengers of the thief's intentions, leading them to kill the thief; or he could kill the thief himself (Gray 2007, 242). He elected the third of these, we are told, to prevent the suffering that would attend the karmic consequences for the passengers and thief if he made one of the other choices. And, the text makes clear, he chose as he did despite his understanding that he would suffer severe karmic consequences himself for killing the thief. However, the text also tells us, given his compassionate intention, the actual karmic consequences of his action were minor for him; he steps on a thorn in a future life (Harvey 2000, 136). Thus, as I read the text, Mahākaruṇika's action is presented as morally right because it resulted in the least suffering possible given the available alternatives. That is, the passage supports a soteriological consequentialist reading of Mahāyāna ethics.[24]

It is worth noting at this point that Soteriological Consequentialism is a form of objectivist, as opposed to subjectivist, consequentialism. Objectivist consequentialism maintains that it is the consequences of an action that determine the action's moral properties, while subjective consequentialism maintains that it is the consequences that an agent intends to follow from an action that determine the action's moral properties (Railton 1984). While the passage we have considered (like so many others in the Buddhist canon) certainly gives a substantial role to an agent's intention, we might pause to note that it does not render that intention definitive regarding the moral properties of an action.[25]

If the point of the story merely concerned the role of intention in Mahāyāna ethics, it's difficult to see why the text would consider all three of the possible courses of action it does. It would seem to be enough that the case is one in which the agent intends to alleviate the suffering of another. Similarly, if the point of the story merely concerned the role of intention in Mahāyāna ethics, it's difficult to see why the text would include a description of the actual, as opposed to merely intended, consequences of the captain's killing. These points cut against Goodman's (2009) interpretation of Buddhist ethics as a form of subjectivist consequentialism; that is, a form of consequentialism that takes the outcomes the agent expects to occur as the basis for determining the relative desirability of alternative courses of action.

## 6 Keown's challenge: part one

Having argued that Mahāyāna ethics is best understood as a form of Soteriological Consequentialism, I should pause to consider recent arguments by Damien Keown (2001) to the effect that I must have gone wrong somewhere as a consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics isn't a viable one.[26] I'll briefly consider what I take to be Keown's two best arguments.[27]

The first argument rests on the charge that a consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics fails to appropriately distinguish between *puñña*, which Keown (2001, 179) renders as 'consequences,' and *kusala*, which Keown (2001, 179) renders as 'moral value.' In response to this charge, before we even turn to the further details of the argument, let us note that '*puñña*' and '*kusala*,' terms which 'can be used as an adjective or a noun' (Harvey 2000, 17–18), are more often given an alternative translation; PD Premasiri (1975, 63–74) and others render them as 'meritorious' and 'skillful,' respectively.[28] In the relevant sense, 'meritorious actions are those that are the cause of temporary happiness' and skillful actions are those that 'cause one to advance along the path to *Nirvāṇa*, the final end to suffering' (Goodman 2009, 68, quoting Premasiri 1975, 69; see also Adam 2005, 64). Cousins (1996, 155, quoted in Harvey 2000, 18) notes that as a noun '*puñña*' 'is applied either to an act which brings good fortune or to the happy result in the future of such an act.' As Peter Harvey (2000, 18) explains, the term 'refers to the auspicious, uplifting, purifying power of good actions to

produce future happy results' and suggests 'an act of karmic fruitfulness' as a translation, 'with "karmically fruitful" as the adjective.'

Given this understanding of *puñña* and *kusala*, contra Keown, an appropriate consequentialist account of the relationship between the two seems within easy reach. On what is in fact arguably a standard Buddhist interpretation, actions which are *puñña* support the future performance of actions that are *kusala*. Both ultimately derive their value from their relationship to *Nirvāṇa* (i.e. the cessation of suffering).[29]

In fact, several chapters in *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* prior to the presentation of the argument with which we are presently concerned, Keown (2001, 119) concedes that 'It is very common for *kusala* to be rendered as "skillful"' but objects to this translation that it 'carries with it a specific implication for the nature of Buddhist ethics, namely that it is utilitarian.' It won't do, however, to argue for a translation of *puñña* and *kusala* on the grounds that the alternative is unacceptably consequentialist and then appeal to the translation in arguing against a consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics.[30]

It would, however, be precipitous for us to move on to Keown's next argument at this point. His concern that a consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics fails to appropriately distinguish between *puñña* and *kusala* intersects with what he refers to as a 'formal consideration' that he contends also counts against a consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics (Keown 2001, 177). The consideration as he sees it is that 'Buddhism [unlike consequentialism] does not define the right independently of the good' (Keown 2001, 177).

In his response to this claim and in defence of his own consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics, Goodman (2009, 184) contends that this consideration is 'based on an elementary misunderstanding' as consequentialism doesn't define the right independently of the good either; it 'defines right actions as those that [maximise the good].' Unfortunately, as I see it, Goodman misses the thrust of Keown's argument.[31]

In explaining his claim that, contra consequentialism, Buddhism defines the right as dependent upon the good, Keown (2001, 177) invokes what he calls 'a clear conceptual relationship' in Buddhism between the right and the good. In Buddhism, as opposed to in utilitarianism, he maintains, 'there is no *ex post facto* conferral of rightness upon actions,' instead actions are 'right or wrong from the moment of [their] inception,' their nature 'fixed by reference to nirvanic values' that 'cannot subsequently change status' (Keown 2001, 177). Wrong (*akusala*) actions, he tells us, 'cannot turn out in the event' to have been right by virtue of their proximate or remote effects' (Keown 2001, 177). Similarly, he claims, right (*kusala*) actions cannot 'turn out to have been wrong in view of their consequences,' although for utilitarian moral theories either of these is a genuine possibility, since such theories define the right and the good independently (Keown 2001, 177).

Keown's charge is thus not, as Goodman suggests, that utilitarianism, unlike Buddhism, takes the right and the good to be entirely independent. Keown

doesn't suffer from an 'elementary misunderstanding.' His charge, as I understand it, is that utilitarianism renders the relationship between the right and the good contingent and subject to change in a way that Buddhism does not.

Of course, as Goodman points out, this is far from the case understood *de dicto*, but, it seems to me, Keown's point is that it is true *de res*. That is, Goodman is right in thinking that (act) consequentialism invariably defines right actions (under that description) as those that maximise the good and sees this relationship between the right (under that description) and the good as conceptually guaranteed. Keown's point, however, is that there is no conceptual guarantee in consequentialism that any particular act, say, giving to charity, will be right as there is no conceptual guarantee that giving to charity will maximise the good. It could turn out 'in the event' that some particular act of giving to charity is wrong because that particular act, unlike typical acts of giving to charity, fails to maximise the good. But, Keown contends, Buddhism cannot countenance this.

Unfortunately for Keown, whatever the plausibility of his argument in the context of Theravāda Buddhism, it falls flat in the context of Mahāyāna Buddhism given the doctrine of skillful means (*upāya*).[32] As Keown (2001, 181) himself admits, there are clearly 'consequentialist patterns of justification' in Mahāyāna Buddhism and 'the doctrine of *upāya* could conceivably justify the programmed subordination of the precepts.'

It seems, however, to once again return to it directly, that Keown's charge that a consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics fails to appropriately distinguish between *puñña* and *kusala* doesn't merely echo his concern that consequentialism, unlike Buddhism, defines the right independently of the good in the sense we have just addressed. He contends in support of his charge that although karmic actions have invariable hedonistic consequences, these consequences are not the source of their moral value; from the Buddhist perspective, it is not pleasant consequences that makes the acts which cause them good, but rather the goodness of actions which makes their consequences pleasant (Keown 2001, 179). He goes on to offer an argument by analogy: consequences are related to, but not identical to, moral value in Buddhism, just as praise and respect are a consequence of, but not identical to, the moral rightness of an act (Keown 2001, 179).[33]

At this point, however, we might note that the Buddha says at *Anguttara Nikāya* i. 58 (quoted in Keown 2001, 116) that we should 'cultivate what is good (*kusala*)' and that 'If cultivating the good conduced to woe and sorrow I would not say "cultivate the good".' Since, as we have seen, what is *kusala* is what 'cause[s] one to advance along the path to *Nirvāṇa*, the final end to suffering' (Goodman 2009, 68, quoting Premasiri 1975, 69), this passage tells us that we ought to cultivate what causes one to reach the final end of suffering. It also assures us that if cultivating what causes one to reach the final end of suffering itself caused suffering we ought not do it. Thus, the passage suggests, the normative properties of actions depend in Buddhism on their consequences. Far from putting the cart before the horse, Soteriological

Consequentialism gets the relationship between consequences and moral value just right.[34]

As to the argument from analogy that consequences are related to, but not identical to, moral value in Buddhism, just as praise and respect are a consequence of, but not identical to, the moral rightness of an act, as I see it, this is at best a caution against misidentifying a secondary consequence of an action with its primary consequence. So long as we appropriately locate the rightness of the action in its relation to the diminution of suffering as opposed to in its relation to something of derivative disvalue, we will not run afoul of Keown's concern. So much for Keown's first argument against a consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics.

## 7 Keown's challenge: part two

Keown's second, and I think central, argument that Buddhist ethics cannot be consequentialist 'concerns ethical motivation' (Keown 2001, 178). In Buddhist ethics, he contends, the rightness of an action is determined by its preceding motivation; thus, as he sees it, 'In Buddhism acts have bad consequences because they are bad acts—they are not bad acts because they have bad consequences, as a utilitarian would maintain' (Keown 2001, 178). However, I'm not at all sure why he takes this to be the case.

As Keown (2001, 178) recognises, in some Mahāyāna texts, 'a breach of the precepts on the basis of *upāya* results in good karmic consequences,' while in other texts 'motivation on the basis of *karuṇā* and beneficial consequences for one's fellow man do not provide absolute justification.' It would seem that Soteriological Consequentialism is in a better position to explain the apparent inconsistency in the canon than Keown is, given his insistence that the motivation preceding an action 'determines its rightness' (Keown 2001, 178).

An action can clearly cause suffering whatever the motive behind it. Since it is this suffering which is of intrinsic disvalue from the Buddhist perspective, it is this suffering—caused by the action—which, other things being equal, causes it to be bad.[35] Of course, across a wide range of cases, Keown (2001, 178) is quite correct; liberal, benevolent, and understanding acts (*arga*, *adosa* and *amoha*) are ordinarily good in large part, and perhaps even defined in large part, in terms of their relationship to the motivation (*cetanā*) that precedes them. However, it is only to the extent that liberality, benevolence and understanding are conducive to the cessation of suffering that they can have value within the Buddhist framework, so it is not they themselves which render an action right, but rather, their usual contingent relationship to the cessation of suffering. Of course, Keown's argument is not that consequentialism cannot account for the goodness of liberality, benevolence and understanding *per se*, but, rather that consequentialism cannot account for the goodness of these as states of character independent of the consequences of the actions that express them. Notice, however, that insofar as these states of character are conducive to the cessation of suffering

irrespective of their expression in action, their goodness can indeed be explained by Soteriological Consequentialism.

The central challenge to Soteriological Consequentialism given Keown's second argument concerns its ability to accommodate the clear emphasis in Buddhism on the importance of preceding motivation or intention (*cetanā*) to the moral properties of actions. While historically influential forms of Consequentialism in the Western moral tradition (e.g. Millian Utilitarianism) may be unable to rise to the challenge, Soteriological Consequentialism is readily capable of doing so. The reason, in short, is that Soteriological Consequentialism takes karmic suffering into consideration and karmic suffering, as we have seen, results from intention. Soteriological Consequentialism can thus readily explain the emphasis in Buddhist ethics on motives or intentions as these are understood to have significant intransitive soteriological consequences.

Of course, Keown (2001, 57–82, 193–228) argues that the emphasis in Buddhist ethics are not just on intention, but also on character, establishes Buddhism as a virtue theory. In response, I note that Keown (2001, 82) himself acknowledges that virtues and vices are important in Buddhist ethics insofar as they are understood to promote or inhibit 'the attainment of the final good.'

It is also worth recalling at this point what we noted above, that the Buddhist tradition as a whole exhibits little interest in ethical theory, concerning itself instead with practical morality. The overwhelming emphasis in Buddhist ethics is descriptive and applied; that is, concerned with proper moral decision making. It is thus, it seems to me, highly plausible to maintain that the emphasis on states of character and intention in Buddhism concerns Buddhist moral decision theory, not the Buddhist account of what determines the moral properties of actions.[36] We can both defend a consequentialist account of what determines the moral properties of actions and allow that people more reliably produce the best consequences when they are not aiming at doing so but, instead, aiming to follow certain rules (e.g. obeying the Buddhist precepts) or aiming to cultivate certain states of character (e.g. the Buddhist virtues).[37]

In all fairness, his arguments against a consequentialist reading of Buddhism notwithstanding, Keown (2001, 179) admits that the problems presented and addressed above do not 'show conclusively that Buddhist ethics is not utilitarian.' The field is thus open for an exploration of a soteriological consequentialist resolution of the apparent inconsistency between violence in the martial arts and Buddhist ethics.

## 8 Soteriological consequentialism and violence in the martial arts

If, as I have suggested, Mahāyāna ethics is appropriately interpreted as a form of Soteriological Consequentialism, reconciling harm and killing in the martial arts with Buddhist ethics is less difficult than it might initially have seemed. As we have seen, the prohibition against harming (*ahiṃsā*) in Mahāyāna Buddhism is appropriately understood as a prohibition against only those instances of

violence that create more suffering than they relieve. Of course, various acts of martial violence rather obviously cause suffering. What is less obvious is how much suffering they relieve.

One might worry, for example, that given the importance it attaches to the diminution of suffering, Soteriological Consequentialism is particularly ill-suited to the reconciliation of Buddhism and the martial arts since, as we noted above, martial arts training involves considerable ordinary suffering. However, Soteriological Consequentialism doesn't entail that one ought never cause suffering, but rather, that one ought never perform an action that results in more overall suffering than available alternatives. As martial arts training obviously involves suffering, the question becomes whether martial arts training prevents more overall suffering than it involves and results in less overall suffering than available alternatives.

We might ask the same question of various other, more narrowly Buddhist, traditional training practices as these also involve considerable ordinary suffering.[38] In both cases, the answer must be the same: Over the long run, from the Buddhist perspective (and with it, the perspective of Buddhist-influenced martial *dō*), proper training alleviates more total suffering than it causes and compares favourably with the available alternatives. As the ultimate end of Buddhist training is the cessation of suffering, insofar as the training is appropriately suited to this purpose, the short-term suffering involved in training is, seen from the Buddhist perspective, more than compensated for by its future cessation, which is not available by less suffering-intensive means.[39]

The kind of martial arts training with which we are concerned is that which takes place in the context of Buddhist-based martial *dō.* These are, seen by their own lights, paths to self-actualisation. In Buddhist context, self-actualisation consists in enlightenment, which is accompanied by a complete cessation of suffering. The suffering of training a martial *dō* (or, more broadly, any Buddhist training) is thus like the suffering involved when a physician relocates a patient's dislocated shoulder joint; considerable at the time but more than compensated for by the subsequent absence of suffering.

One might worry, however, that this account is subject to a similar kind of objection to that which I raised earlier in the chapter in response to The No-Desire-to-Harm, No-Violence and The No-Agent, No-Action approaches to reconciling Buddhism with the martial arts; while it may explain why it is morally permissible for those martial artists who will someday be enlightened to practice martial arts, it doesn't explain why it is morally permissible for the vast majority of martial artists, who will not someday be enlightened as a result of their practice, to engage in martial arts. But, this worry is misplaced. From the Buddhist perspective, some Buddhist practice (and, by extension, some Buddhist-based martial practice) results in some significant diminution of the practitioner's suffering, even if not its cessation. In this sense, the analogy with the physician who relocates the dislocated shoulder is misleading. The more relevant analogy is with the physician who treats a patient's asthma with an anti-inflammatory medication that provides relatively immediate

symptomatic relief but, used over time, also gradually eliminates the underlying disease.[40]

One might object that the account I have just offered seems to inappropriately address only the suffering of the individual martial artists themselves. What of the pain martial artists cause their training partners? The best response, it seems to me, is that injuries in the course of proper practice are part of progress along the Martial Way. Martial practice is an essentially communal affair in the context of which practitioners pursue the Martial Way together, helping those they train to advance along the Way (sometimes even by injuring them) while they advance themselves (see Young 2010, 12–14).

## 9 Soteriological consequentialism and the moral-theoretically neutral approaches

Before closing, let us briefly return to the moral-theoretically neutral approaches with which we began. Recall that the moral-theoretically neutral approaches seemed attractive in some regards even if ultimately unsatisfactory. Notice that we can capture from the soteriological consequentialist perspective what is intuitively correct about the No-Desire-to-Harm, No-Violence and the No-Agent, No-Action approaches.

In the cases with which The No-Desire-to-Harm, No-Violence Approach is concerned, the martial artist lacks the desire to harm. In the cases with which The No-Agent, No-Action Approach is concerned, the martial artist lacks, roughly speaking, all mental states, and hence, the desire to harm. As we noted above, from the Buddhist perspective, the desire to harm is an afflictive mental state (*kleśa*), a state conducive to suffering. Further, from the Buddhist perspective any mental state ordinarily gives rise to future iterations of similar states (as karma is in part roughly 'force of habit'). Thus, *ceteris paribus*, the presence of a desire to harm one's opponent, like any other *kleśa*, would increase rather than decrease the sum total of suffering. So, according to Soteriological Consequentialism, *ceteris paribus*, it is better for a martial artist to strike down an opponent without any intention to harm him than it would be for her to strike down that opponent out of a desire to harm him. Soteriological Consequentialism thus captures the intuitive appeal of The No-Desire-to-Harm, No-Violence and The No-Agent, No-Action approaches.

## 10 Soteriological consequentialism and the broader context of violence in martial arts

In closing, let us briefly take inventory of our progress in reconciling the violence of martial *dō* with their basis in Buddhist ethics. I have suggested, although certainly not established, that Soteriological Consequentialism offers us a viable, and in certain respects intuitively attractive, way to reconcile the violence that is a proper part of martial *dō* with its basis in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Of course, Soteriological Consequentialism doesn't condone every violent act

that takes place in conjunction with traditional martial practice; no plausible moral theory would.[41] The challenge was to provide a basis in Buddhist ethics for the range of violent acts positively valued from the *dō*-internal standpoint as a proper part of martial arts practice. It seems to me that I have met that challenge.

Of course, considerably more work needs to be done in both developing and evaluating a soteriological consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics as an account of the Buddhist-based moral theoretic commitments of traditional martial arts. It remains to be seen, for example, whether Soteriological Consequentialism has the resources with which to explain why the full range of violent acts positively valued by traditional martial-*dō* are morally permissible from a Buddhist-based *dō*-internal perspective and not merely those acts which were the concern of this chapter, those which occur in the course of proper martial practice.

The task will not be a small one. There is considerable work to be done in simply determining what the full range of violent acts positively valued by traditional martial-*dō* is in the first place.[42] The perspective of martial-*dō* (as opposed to *jutsu*) on the conditions, if any, under which the prosecution of war is permissible is unclear. And, while it would seem that martial-*dō* permit the use of their techniques in self-defence under at least some conditions, what these conditions are, exactly, is also unclear.[43] The larger task of reconciling the violence of the martial arts with their basis in Buddhist ethics is somewhat daunting. But I think we have made what is at least a little progress already.[44]

## Notes

1 Consider as examples of overtly Buddhist martial arts *Shinkage-Ryu*, *Hwarang Do*, *Muto Ryu*, *Hapkido*, and *Shaolin Kempo*. See Yagyu (2003, 37–41), Lee (1984, 1–2), Stevens (1994, 43–84), Myung (1976, 25–26), and Corcoran and Farkas (1983, 64).

2 *Milindapañha* (185), a central text of the Buddhist canon, tells us that *ahiṃsā* is 'the distinguishing mark' of Buddhist doctrine (Harvey 2000, 69).

3 For further treatment of the distinction between *budō* and *bujutsu* see Morgan (1992, 9–11), Hyams (1979, 10) and Random (1984, 68). For a treatment of the origins of the terms *bujutsu* and *budō* see Ratti and Westbrook (1999, 21–29, 445–446).

4 For a treatment of Buddhist just war theory, see for example, Jerryson and Juergensmeyer (2010) and Bartholomeusz (2002).

5 *Budō* and *bujutsu* are not exhaustive of the martial arts; there are also, for example, sport martial arts like World Taekwondo Federation (Olympic) Taekwondo. However, as these are not understood to be based in Buddhism, we can also set them aside for present purposes.

6 The founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba (quoted in Stevens 1987, 94) maintained, for example, that 'To smash, injure, or destroy is the worst sin a human being can commit. The old saying "The martial deities never kill" is true. Real *budō* is a Path of Peace.' The founder of Shōtōkan Karate, Gichin Funakoshi (1975, 54), likewise describes the avoidance of violence as 'the true spirit of Karate.' Kenpo master Ed Parker (quoted in Hyams 1979, 141) maintained that 'The point of achieving proficiency in any martial art is to be able to walk away from a fight rather than to win it.'

7 For a sense of the injuries that occur in the course of martial arts practice, see Priest and Young (2010, 223–227).

8 For the contrary view, see Becker (1989, 98–99).
9 We cannot, for example, contend that 'violence is the violating of personal rights' (Betz 1977, 340).
10 Consider the practice of repeatedly striking a 'forging post' (Korean: *dallyon joo*), tree or other hard object to toughen the hand. See Choi (1972, 244–245). See also Salzman (1990, 64) and Nemoto (1982).
11 We might also note in passing that those less familiar with the martial arts also generally don't distinguish *dō* from *jutsu* or high injury rate sport martial arts like the 'Mixed Martial Arts' employed in cage fighting.
12 Thus, to offer further examples, the sensation attendant to strangulation by properly performed Judo and Jūjutsu chokeholds in controlled environments is 'rather pleasant' and, at least if they are followed by proper resuscitation, such chokeholds do no injury to the person strangled (Harrison 1989, 321–326). I can say the same from personal experience of falling properly on training mats after being thrown with well-executed Judo, Aikido, and Hapkido techniques (although the point regarding these techniques requires no qualification regarding resuscitation).
13 For instances of this argument see Becker (1989, 98–100) and Suzuki (1970, 145).
14 For a treatment of *kleśa* in Buddhism, see Stcherbatsky (1956, 84–86).
15 For instances of this argument see Suzuki (1970, 166), Hyams (1979, 89), and the translator's introduction by Bradford J. Brown et al. to Musashi (1982, xxvi–xxvii). For a brief treatment of the basis of the argument in the *Treatise of Absolute Contemplation*, 'a short text from the Dhyāna school probably from the eight century,' see Demiéville (2010, 56, n. 144).
16 For an argument that it does not see Loori (1996, 82–87).
17 For a treatment of skillful means and their influence on Mahāyāna Buddhist ethics, see Harvey (2000, 134).
18 For an argument that Mahāyāna ethics is best treated in its own right and not merely as of a kind with Theravāda ethics see, for example, Chappell (1996, 351–375). After remarking in the preface (Keown 2005, x) that his expertise is in Theravāda Buddhism, Keown (2005, 3) asserts the opposite view (i.e. that Mahāyāna ethics is not best treated in its own right) without argument in *Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*. Keown (2001) apparently adopts the same view, also without argument.
19 For detailed textual argument for the same conclusion in the domain of Chinese Buddhism in particular, see Harris (2011). For a discussion of what I see as underdetermination in *Mahāparinibbānasutta* see Pandita (2011, 125–144). For a clear example of underdetermination in a single text, see Keown (2001, 151). Further text-based work regarding underdetermination in the Buddhist canon is clearly in order, but beyond the scope of the present chapter.
20 For a treatment of Theravāda Buddhism as a form of rule consequentialism, see Goodman (2009, 47–72).
21 For the full text of the Four Noble Truths, see for example, Conze (1959, 186–187).
22 For a treatment of existential suffering and its relationship to the other forms of suffering, see Siderits (2007, 19).
23 As Keown (2005, 5) points out, the third through fifth of these are explicitly identified in the broader Buddhist tradition as concerning *śilā* ('morality'). However, as Harvey (2000, 130) points out, 'in Māhayāna, the concept of ethics (*śilā*) became broadened so as to be seen no longer as simply one component of the path; in the widest sense it encompassed the whole of it.'
24 As Harvey (2000, 136, n. 13) notes, 'a similar story is also found in the Mahā-Ūpāya-kauśalya Sūtra.' For a broader and more nuanced treatment of these elements of Mahāyāna ethics, see Keown (2001, 129–164). It is my intention here to present only what Keown (2001, 152) refers to as the '"permissive attitude" [...] revealed in Mahāyāna sources' and to establish that my interpretation of Buddhist ethics is supported by passages of the canon. Of course, other passages support other interpretations; as I argued earlier, the texts underdetermine the matter.

25 There will, of course, be cases in which the intention is decisive although still not definitive. Consider the case in which there are only two available courses of action, A and B, and in which the amount of direct (non-karmic) suffering which results from these is the same. The indirect (karmic, and hence, intention-based) suffering which results from A and B, respectively, will be decisive in determining which of the two actions is right. Similarly, when the amount of karmic suffering is greater across all available options than the amount of non-karmic suffering, the karmic suffering will be decisive, but again not definitive, of the moral properties of the actions.

26 Keown (2001, 174) contends in specific that Buddhist ethics are not appropriately construed as a form of 'negative utilitarianism,' which he described following Smart (Smart and Williams 1973, 29 cited in Keown 2001, 174) as the view that we should minimise suffering, rather than maximise happiness. Keown (2001) refers to each form of consequentialism he considers (rule, act, and negative consequentialism) as a form of 'utilitarianism.' I suspect that a failure to appropriately distinguish utilitarianism in specific from consequentialism more generally is the source of some of what I see as his errors in arguing against a 'utilitarian' interpretation of consequentialism.

27 For a response to Keown's further arguments against a consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics, see Goodman (2009, 183–189). Our interest here is in Mahāyāna Buddhism, not in Buddhist ethics as a whole, but as Keown sees Buddhist ethics as unified and takes his arguments to apply to Buddhist ethics as a whole, we can understand his arguments to apply to the form of Buddhism to which we have restricted our attention (i.e. Mahāyāna).

28 As we will see, Keown (2001, 119) acknowledges the greater frequency of this translation himself.

29 As Keown argues (Keown 2001, 83–105), temporary karmic good and lasting nirvanic good, and thus *puñña* and *kusala*, are part of the 'same continuum.'

30 Keown (2001, 119) does add after the previous quotation that it is also 'a poor translation on aesthetic grounds' because 'skillful' is a term of mere 'technical commendation' in English, whereas '"good" and *kusala* extend in their respective languages to both moral and technical commendation.' But it seems to me inappropriate to rule out consequentialism as a viable moral theoretic interpretation of Buddhist ethics in part on the basis of mere aesthetic considerations.

31 Perhaps this is because he individuates Keown's arguments improperly, taking what Keown offers as 'one reason why Buddhist ethics cannot be utilitarian' and what he offers as a gloss on that same reason as separate arguments. See Keown (2001, 178) and Goodman (2009, 184).

32 I suspect that Keown's arguments falter where they apparently do because he may fail to adequately appreciate the divergences between Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism. In the preface to *Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*, he notes that 'the "Buddhism" discussed in the present work is not that of any one school, culture, or historical period, and, although my own expertise is in Theravāda Buddhism, my remarks are made with respect to an amorphous fiction which for convenience might be termed "mainstream Buddhism"' (Keown 2005, x). Whatever the merits of his work in *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (and in my estimation these are considerable), the argumentation seems at times to suffer from the prejudicial assumption that Mahāyāna Buddhism is best understood as of a moral theoretic kind with Theravāda Buddhism. I don't believe it is and I suspect that in writing *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* Keown (2001) may have been under the influence of the conceptual fiction he explicitly recognises as such only later.

33 Keown (2001) makes no apparent reference to the Buddhist canon in support of his concern about a consequentialist treatment of consequence and moral value.

34 We can agree with Keown (2001, 179) that 'while karmic actions do invariably have hedonistic consequences this is not where their moral value resides.' Soteriological

Consequentialism contends that it is in the soteriological, not hedonistic, consequences in which the moral value of actions resides.

35 This consideration also provides us with an argument against subjectivist consequentialist interpretations of Buddhist ethics like Goodman's (2009, 184). It seems uncharitable to attribute to Buddhism the view that a compassionate, but deeply confused person who intends to alleviate suffering by a means which (unbeknownst to her) causes great suffering and alleviates none, does the right thing.

36 Consider, in support of this reading, remarks like James Whitehill's (1994, 1): 'In describing Buddhist ethics as an "ethics of virtue," I am pointing to a consistent and essential features in the Buddhist way of life.'

37 For a treatment of the general point see Bales (1971, 257–265). Calculating the consequences of actions may present a difficulty in the context of any consequentialist theory, but the difficulty may be especially great in the context of Soteriological Consequentialism as it takes karmic suffering into account and, as Keown (2001, 181) notes, without the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) of a Buddha, which ordinary people lack, the karmic consequences of an action are difficult to perceive or ascertain. However, as Keown (1996, 329) also notes elsewhere, 'any systematic account of Buddhist ethics must before long make reference to karma.' Any account of Buddhist ethics will thus face similar epistemological problems, even if at different junctures.

38 For further details, see, for example, the description offered by Beck (1989, 11) of the ordinary suffering attendant to traditional meditation in the lotus posture and the description offered by van de Wetering (1973) of the ordinary suffering attendant to traditional Japanese monastic training.

39 The apparent plausibility of this claim increases considerably once we recall that the suffering at issue is not merely ordinary suffering, but also existential suffering.

40 Becker (1989, 99–102) offers an argument based on empirical studies and an account of the self-control that martial arts training involves that such training decreases aggression and incidences of violent behaviour. Of particular note is Becker's reference to Pyecha (1970, 425) suggesting that, as Becker puts it, 'as little as 8 weeks of judo training [...] were still productive of a more warm and easygoing personality type' (Becker 1989, 101). I argue elsewhere (Schubert 2010) that martial arts training cultivates compassion.

41 Consider, for example, the infamous case of Sokaku Takeda's treatment as a young boy at the hands of his grandfather, Soemon, and father, Sokichi, who 'singed Sokaku's fingers if he failed to learn a technique quickly enough' (Stevens 1987, 9). Consider also, more generally, bullying and the abuse of power from which traditional martial arts are, unfortunately, not immune (Haffner and Vogel 2010, 151).

42 For a discussion of some of the difficulties involved in this work see Morgan (1992, 3–4).

43 I suspect that the common understanding of these conditions, even among martial artists, is out of keeping with the tradition, which has a more restrictive understanding. For grounds for this suspicion, see for example, Funakoshi (1975, 48–52).

44 An earlier version of this chapter was delivered at the *2006 Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Philosophy and the Martial Arts* in Portland, Oregon under the title 'Soteriological Consequentialism and Violence in the Martial Arts' (Schubert 2006). I am indebted to the members of the Society for their thoughtful, challenging, and helpful comments, which, along with those of three anonymous publication referees, allowed me to greatly improve the current version.

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# 11

# THE MARTIAL ARTS AND BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

*Graham Priest*

## 1 East Asian martial arts

My topic concerns the martial arts—or at least the East Asian martial arts, such as karatedo, taekwondo, kendo, *wushu*. To what extent what I have to say applies to other martial arts, such as boxing, silat, capoeira, I leave as an open question. I will illustrate much of what I have to say with reference to karatedo, since that is the art with which I am most familiar;[1] but I am sure that matters are much the same with other East Asian martial arts.

Karatedo is a style of martial art that developed in Okinawa. It evolved from a fusion of a local martial art (*te*) with empty hands and farm implements as weapons, and *wushu* techniques imported from the Chinese mainland. (A number of historically significant karate masters either came from China, or trained there.) It migrated to the Japanese mainland at the start of the twentieth century, and thence, because of increasing Western involvement with Japan post-World War II, to the West.[2]

Karetedo, and the East Asian martial arts in general, teach many things. But one thing they undeniably are is a training of how to be violent to others. Karate *jutsu* (techniques) are designed to stop an attacker in various ways, varying from restraint and temporary disablement, to maiming, and even killing. The training in the dojo (training-place) is both physical and mental. The physical training concerns learning the techniques and how to apply them (though obviously a number of them have to be practiced in a restrained way with training partners). The mental training is in the psychological discipline necessary to apply the techniques effectively, should this ever be required. It is worth noting that many East Asian martial arts, karate included, have evolved sports forms in the last 100 years. These involve competition governed by strict rules. Thus, in sporting fights, only a limited number of techniques are permissible: those which can maim or kill an opponent are not allowed. Unlike real fighting, people must play

by rules; and the point becomes just to win a medal. Many clubs now concentrate on this kind of practice; in the process, essential parts of 'traditional karate' are often lost. Though I do not want to denigrate sports karate (it's alright in its place), it is clearly a deviation from the tradition of the art; and it is the 'traditional art' of which I shall be speaking.[3]

## 2 Two puzzles

This is sufficient background for me to explain two puzzles which frame the rest of this chapter.

### *2.1 Puzzle number 1*

There is undeniably a close connection between the East Asian martial arts and Buddhism—especially Zen Buddhism. Legend has it that the first patriarch of Zen Buddhism was Bodhidharma, an Indian missionary who took up residence at the Shaolin Temple. Legend has it that the same Bodhidharma was the founder of the Shaolin *wushu*. Whatever the history, the Shaolin Temple is famous for producing Zen Buddhist monks who are also *wushu* practitioners. The connection goes far beyond this, though. Many samurai, such as the legendary Musashi Miamoto (who also practiced Zen calligraphy), were Buddhists, and saw their Buddhism and their martial practice as deeply connected.[4] The Zen Buddhist monk Takuan Sōhō is well known for having written letters to martial practitioners giving them Zen advice (see Cleary 2005). Indeed, in traditional dojo, training sessions begin and end with short *zazen* (kneeling meditation) sessions. The Buddhist connection is also evident in popular martial arts books (such as Hyams 1982), and Buddhist ideas are evident in the thought of many great karate masters (see, e.g., Funakoshi 2003).

Now, this connection is certainly puzzling.[5] Buddhism is a religion and philosophy that is strongly anti-violence. Indeed, it has a number of Precepts (codes of conduct), the first of which expresses the principle of *ahiṃsā*, non-violence (see, e.g., Harvey 2000, 69). The major rationale of Buddhism is the elimination of *duḥkha*—a Sanskrit word whose meaning is hard to translate, though it certainly includes physical suffering. Clearly, the cause of a good deal of physical suffering is violence. How can those on a Buddhist path train to inflict violence on others, or give advice to others about effective ways of doing so?[6]

### *2.2 Puzzle number 2*

People trained in these martial arts are frequently more peaceable than ordinary people. Indeed, it is not uncommon for people who take up such an art in order to learn how to fight to lose the desire to do so. It is hard to get documentary evidence of this;[7] but it is folklore, and certainly gels with my experience. And legend has it of many great karate masters that they refused

to fight, even when they knew they would win easily (see, e.g., the anecdote in Hyams 1982, 131–133). Again, this is odd. Training to climb mountains makes you *more* likely to climb mountains. Training to speak a foreign language makes you *more* likely to speak the language. How is it that training in how to be violent makes you *less* likely to be violent?

A caveat here. Not all training in an East Asian martial art produces peaceful people. Some martial arts clubs are quite prepared, for example, to turn out bouncers who are only too happy to apply their martial skills on unsuspecting victims. A more guarded way of putting my point is, therefore, that there is something about certain kinds of martial training that can have this effect on people. What and why?

Doubtless, answers to both of these questions are complex and multi-faceted. Thus, one reason, one might suppose, that Buddhists train in a martial art is for self-defence. Buddhism *per se* is not against this. And one reason that a training in violence might make you less violent is that violence and aggression are often driven by gut-reaction fear. If you know that you have the ability to defend yourself, fear may well be reduced, or at least controlled.

But these can hardly constitute sufficient answers. To learn to defend yourself, it is hardly necessary to practice hours a week, year after year—long beyond the point where any casual attacker is a serious threat. A short self-defence course with a readily available weapon such as a stick (or, in modern terms, a can of mace), is probably just as good at this. And though decreasing one's fear may make one less aggressive, this hardly explains why trained martial artists should not be violent just for the love of it (in the way that people play the piano just for the love of it). There must be more going on than these things.

In what follows, I want to suggest a more profound explanation: that a training in the martial arts of the appropriate kind can itself be a way of treading the Buddhist path.[8] In what follows, I will explain some of the basics of this path. I will then explain how a martial training can implement at least certain important aspects of it. I will end by returning to our two puzzles.

## 3 Basic Buddhism

There are many forms of Buddhism, just as there are many forms of Christianity. And there are significant differences—metaphysical, ethical, and practical—between the different forms. Thus the metaphysics of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), to be found in all the Mahāyāna Buddhisms, is quite different from the reductionism of the earlier Abhidharma traditions. The central importance of the virtue of compassion, again in Mahāyāna Buddhisms, is quite different from the stress on self-enlightenment of the pre-Mahāyāna forms. And the tantric practices of Tibetan Buddhisms are a million miles away from the koan practice of Rinzai Zen Buddhism.[9]

There are, however, some general ideas common to all forms of Buddhism. These are based on the direct pronouncements of the historical Buddha

(Siddhārtha Gautama, *c.* sixth century BCE) and his first teachings, known as the Four Noble Truths. These generic considerations will be sufficient for our purposes.[10] I emphasize that I am not here concerned to defend the views—though I do assume (and I think, justifiably) that Buddhist practices have a certain causal efficacy. My aim is simply to explain the ideas, so that I can make the relevant points about martial arts practices.

The Buddha's teachings present a picture of what one might call the human condition, and how to ameliorate it. All people get ill, age (if they are lucky enough), may lose limbs, loved ones; many suffer at the hands of tsunamis, nuclear disasters, and other 'acts of god'; they are maimed or traumatised by war. And so the catalogue of unhappinesses goes on. Of course, people do derive pleasure from many things in life; but the natural consequence of this is that they are not content with such impermanent pleasures, and desire more—generating more unhappiness. As Hume observed, then, if the world is designed by a god, human happiness was not his purpose.[11]

There is, however, something that can be done about this situation. The first thing is to realise that, though we cannot really control what fate brings our way, we can control our *attitude* to it. When bad things happen, we get upset because we *make* ourselves so. It is the mental clinging and attachment, that we bring to events, which generate the unhappiness. Moreover, the world we live in is one of impermanence. Nothing lasts forever; all things will eventually pass. Once one realises this, the folly of clinging becomes patent.

A particularly pernicious case of attachment concerns the self. A person is like a car, whose parts come together at a certain time, interact, wear out sometimes and are replaced, and finally fall apart. Our parts are not mechanical or electronic in the same way as those of a car: they are psycho-biological; but the point remains the same. Indeed, just as, in reality, there is nothing more to the car than the sum of its parts, there is nothing more to a person than the sum of their parts. There is no essential self or soul which holds them all together.[12] We certainly have the illusion that there is, though. We all think that there is an essential 'me-ness,' something which is present throughout my existence, which defines me as me. The attachment to this non-existent object is an especially strong source of grief.

## 4 The Noble Eightfold Path

An upshot of all this is that it makes sense to get rid of the attitude of attachment, which is the one source of unhappiness that is largely under our control. If one can do this, then one will be left with a resulting peace of mind, whatever slings and arrows of outrageous fortune arrive.[13] Getting your head around the kind of world you live in and the kind of thing you are (not), certainly helps. But simply knowing the facts is not enough. One has to break ingrained and powerful psychological habits. Illusions can be hard to shake off, even when one knows that they *are* illusions.

To this end, the Buddha suggested a number of fields of attention that, when suitably pursued, can help. This is the fourth of the Noble Truths, itself called the Noble Eightfold Path (see e.g., Koller 2002, Chapter 12; or Mitchell 2002, Chapter 2). The eight fields are usually broken up into three groups.

1 Cognitive: *right view*; *right intention*. Having the right view is, as I have said, a good start. But just as important is the determination to dig oneself out of the hole one is in. Without that, nothing will happen.[14]
2 Ethical: *right speech*, *right action*, *right livelihood*. Cutting this cake into three is, to a certain extent, artificial. The point is that one should treat others appropriately. Don't lie, steal, kill, or do other things that are wont to inflict suffering on others. No doubt an important part of the idea here is that if one does not like to suffer at the hands of others, one should not inflict suffering on them. But more important is the fact that the practice of putting the interests of others before one's own is an important step in ridding oneself of the self-centred grasping which destroys peace of mind.
3 Attitudinal: *right effort*, *right mindfulness*, *right concentration*. Right effort is the realisation of the right intention. Akrasia is all too easy, and self-discipline is required. Right mindfulness is the ability to be aware of what one's mind and body are doing. How are you going to be able to control your mind if you are not aware of what it is up to? The same goes for your body. Not that these two things are unconnected. Mind and body interact. How can you expect your mind to work at its best if you abuse your body smoking heavily, over-eating, or living in inebriation? Conversely, how can you expect your body to work properly if your mind is a mess? The Latins who popularised the slogan '*mens sana in corpore sano*' knew what they were doing. Finally, right concentration is the ability of mental focus. Right mindfulness is not going to be achieved if one's mind is all over the place.

Of course, how best to implement these steps is not entirely obvious. (And that is where many of the variations in Buddhist practices come in.) But all forms of Buddhism agree that some kinds of meditative practices are important. There are various kinds of such practice. This isn't the place to go into the variety (see, e.g., Leaman 1999, 200 ff.); suffice it here to note that mental focus—mindfulness and concentration—are central to all of them.

## 5 Martial training

We are now in a position to see how a martial training can be taken to implement some of these Buddhist ideas.[15]

Start with the Noble Eightfold Path. There is little in a martial training which addresses the cognitive aspects of this. I have never trained at a dojo where any Buddhist (or other) philosophical ideas about impermanence, the self, attachment, and so on, were discussed.[16] But this is perhaps the least important aspect of the Path. In most Mahāyāna Buddhisms, the fundamental

truth about reality is ineffable, a simple *tathatā* ('thatness') (see, e.g., Keown 2003, 296); any description of how things are, is ultimately inadequate. Buddhist doctrines may be helpful *en route*, but they are themselves just as inadequate in the last instance. They are just a skilful means (*upāya*), to be discarded when they have done their job. Indeed, in Zen, great stress is placed on the fact that enlightenment can be arrived at only by direct wordless transmission (see, e.g., Welter 2000). Actions speak louder than words. (And there is certainly plenty of action in a dojo!)

The connections between a martial training and the other parts of the Path are more evident. Take ethics, to start with. Again, this is rarely discussed in a dojo, but a good training embeds in people crucial ethical values. One bows with respect on entering and leaving a dojo, at the beginning and the end of a *kata* performance, and of training with a partner. One has respect for one's teacher and the senior students from whom one learns.[17] One has concern for the well-being of one's training partners and those whom one teaches. Anger, ill will, and lack of self-control are not tolerated. And one learns respect for oneself as well. Nor is this something that stops when one leaves the dojo: one takes it out of the dojo too. In the dojo, one learns how to interact with other people, not just with other karateka. And one thing that goes with this respect is a determination not to use violence unless absolutely necessary. In karate, all *kata* begin with a defensive movement. This is often taken to be symbolic of the fact that karate techniques should only ever be used in self-defence. There is a traditional saying: '*karate ni sente nashi*' (in karate there is no first strike).[18]

Effort and self-discipline are also required and developed in a martial training. For a start, these are required in exercises that build up strength and stamina. Training routines also have to be repeated many times until they become reflexive. One has to discipline oneself to do what one is told immediately and without reservation. And one learns the self-discipline of patience. For many things (such as the results of grading exams) one just has to wait. One aspect of self-discipline is particularly germane in the present context. In the dojo, things will often happen that you don't like: you get hit in sparring, you make a mistake in a *kata* when everyone is watching, you fail a grading exam. You have to learn to shrug this off, put it behind you—to just carry on and focus on what comes next.

For the final two parts of the Path, one has to know something about *kata*. A major part of a martial training is the learning of sequences of movements, *kata*. These can be long or short, fast or slow, but are repeated over and over again until one does them without thinking. Developing a *kata* can be done only with great mindfulness of one's body, the position of one's limbs, the angle and speed of movements. Moreover, a *kata* should be performed with complete focus and concentration. When one performs a move of the *kata*, that and only that is where one's being is. In the context of Buddhist meditation practices, this would be called 'one-pointedness' (*citta-ekagratā*) (see Keown 2003, 62). I think, in fact, that it is not fanciful to see *kata* performance as a kind of moving

meditation. (In Buddhist traditions, meditation does not have to be done sitting or kneeling: it can be done walking, for example.[19])

## 6 *Kumite*

Another central part of a martial training is *kumite*. This is fighting with a training partner to develop one's skills in practice. *Kumite* can be of many kinds, from simple prearranged exercises, to free sparring, where both people can attack or defend in any way they like (though always with control).

For many people, this is the hardest part of the training. Being attacked by someone (often someone who is better than you), naturally brings out fear, and aggression naturally comes in its wake. One must learn to conquer these—if only because fear and aggression make one much less efficient in performing: they slow down one's reactions, and make one's techniques wild and inefficient. It's an old adage, but a true one, that one's true opponent in this situation is not one's attacker but oneself: one's own mental dispositions, which need to be controlled.

What one must learn to do is to empty the mind of all thoughts, emotions, and react purely spontaneously (a spontaneity based, of course, on routines hard wired in by constant repetition). This is what is called *mushin* (no mind) in Japanese.[20] Naturally, one thing that goes in the process is any sense of self. Getting rid of the sense of self is, as I noted, one of the most important things in Buddhism. Perhaps for evolutionary reasons, in a situation where one has to fight, one's sense of self is particularly strong. If it can be overcome in this particularly stressful situation, it ought to be much easier to overcome it in more mundane situations.

A final word on *kiai*. This is a shout used at various times in both *kumite* and *kata*. The point is to increase the effectiveness of one's action. It does this by focusing mind and body into a single undiluted present. Shouts may be used in the Zen tradition for exactly the same reason (see Kasulis 1981, 122).

## 7 The puzzles revisited

There are probably other important connections between a martial training and Buddhism that I have missed. But I hope that I have said enough, anyway, to demonstrate that an appropriate martial training can be a way of implementing a Buddhist path, even though one may not be consciously aware of this, or even if one has never even heard of Buddhism.

Let me end by returning to the two puzzles with which I started. Why has Buddhism often been connected with a martial training? That should now be obvious. It is one way of following the path. It is no accident that most martial arts are called *dō*: ways. They are not simply learning to fight, but training in a path of much greater import. (Of course, I am not suggesting that a training in a martial art is the only way to follow the path, or even the best way. It seems entirely plausible that different ways are appropriate for different people.)

And why should those who undergo this kind of training become more peaceful people? If I am right, the training is effective in inculcating those attitudes important to Buddhism—in particular, in freeing oneself from attitudes that result in mental disease, and allowing one to be in a state of inner peace. Greater inner peace leads naturally to greater outer peace. Those with inner peace have less desire to be aggressive or violent to others (or themselves). I am not suggesting that all this is a conscious matter. Many things we do have an effect on our mental states in ways of which we are unaware. Nor am I suggesting that accomplished martial practitioners are Buddhist saints. That would be absurd. They usually have the same human failings as anyone else. But as Aristotle observed, it is in our practices that we develop the sort of person we are (*Nichomachean ethics*, Book 2, Chapter 1). This is certainly true of religious practices, such as those of Buddhism, and, it might now appear, of an appropriate martial training.[21]

## Notes

1 A brief autobiographical note: I have been practicing karatedo now for well over 20 years. I am 4th dan in *Shitoryu* (Yoshukan) and a 3rd dan in Karatedo Shobukai. Before giving up sports karate, I was also an Australian national kumite referee and *kata* judge. I have trained for substantial periods of time at dojo in Australia, Japan, the US, and the UK (the dojo in the last two countries being with styles other than my own).
2 Karate has traditionally been passed on by direct transmission of practice. There are hardly any written records before the twentieth century. Good (objective and reliable) histories of karate are therefore hard to find. Bishop (1999) is one of the most authoritative I know.
3 Some styles of karate allow full-contact competition, which is obviously more realistic than 'non-contact' forms. But even in these, certain techniques are forbidden as too dangerous. Sporting competition was never a part of traditional karate.
4 See King (1993). On Musashi specifically, see the last chapter of his *Book of Five Rings* (Cleary 1993), 'The Book of Emptiness.'
5 Historically, there are many political connections between Buddhist institutions and state power, including military power. (For a survey, see Harvey 2000, 264–270.) The dynamics of power-structures makes *this* anything but puzzling.
6 It is clear why martial practitioners might want to *receive* advice concerning certain Buddhist mental practices. These can have effects that improve fighting, as we will note in due course. However, that hardly explains why a Buddhist should want to *give* such advice.
7 Some can be found in Layton (1988, 1990), Nosanchuck (1981), Nosanchuck and MacNeil (1989), and Rothpearl (1980).
8 For a light-hearted expression of the idea, see Priest (2010).
9 On the variety of Buddhisms, see Mitchell (2002).
10 On the following, see e.g. Siderits 2007, Chapters 2, 3.
11 See his *Dialogues concerning natural religion*, Part X.
12 Which is not to say that the *person* does not exist, any more than that the car does not exist—though some Buddhist schools, notably the early Abhidharma schools, do endorse the thought that a partite object does not have the same reality as its ultimate parts.
13 One can find views similar to this in various Hellenistic philosophies, such as Stoicism and Epicureanism. See e.g., Irwin (1989, Chapters 8, 9).

14 Note that determination is not the same as attachment. The former is a resolute decision to act in a certain way. The latter is about the attitude one has to the results of our actions when things go right or wrong.
15 For a number of interesting observations relevant to the following discussion, see Bäck and Kim (1979).
16 Though of course there may be *some* Buddhist practitioners who also teach a martial art, and who talk to their students about Buddhist ideas. Thus, see Furuya (1996).
17 On the importance of respect in the martial arts, see Young (2009) and, for a more light-hearted account, Young (2010).
18 Funakoshi (2003, 23 ff.). On the theme of violence, Buddhism, and the martial arts, see Mortensen (2010).
19 See e.g., Hahn (1996). Indeed, some Zen Buddhist masters, such as Hakuin, held kneeling meditation to be somewhat useless. See Kasulis (1981, 111).
20 As described by Takuan Sōhō in his letters of advice. See the translations in Cleary (2005). For a light-hearted commentary, see Finnegan and Tanaka (2010). A more extensive discussion of *mushin* can be found in Herrigal (1981). The parallel between Zen and the martial arts, in that both require unmediated response, rather than premeditated action, is noted by Kasulis (1981, 121) and Deshimaru (1985).
21 A talk based on this chapter was given under the title 'Karatedo and Buddhism,' at the Royal Institute of Philosophy, London, October 2011, in their series of lectures on Philosophy and Sport. I am grateful to the audience there for their helpful comments. I am grateful, also, to two anonymous referees for their comments, and, especially, to Damon Young for his. A version of this chapter appeared as Priest (2013), and is reprinted here with the permission of the Royal Institute of Philosophy.

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# 12

# BOWING TO YOUR ENEMIES

## Courtesy, *budō* and Japan

*Damon Young*

### Introduction: *Sanshiro Sugata,* courtesy and *budō*

The great Japanese director Akira Kurasawa's first film was *Sanshiro Sugata*. Based on Tsuneo Tomita's book recounting the beginnings of Judo in the Meiji era, it follows the fortunes of Sanshiro Sugata, a young man who travels to the city to learn *jūjutsu* (柔術) from a famous teacher. The teacher turns out to be a dissipated alcoholic, and his students vulgar thugs. After watching these students get thrashed by the founder of a new martial art, *jūdō* (柔道), Sugata begs to learn from this teacher. Much of the film follows his physical, ethical and spiritual development from an angry and headstrong young brute to a calm and selfless young man. One of the most powerful scenes in the film is its penultimate fight, which pits Sugata against the head of the rival *jūjutsu* school, Hansuke Murai. While Murai has given up his alcoholism, he still represents a dangerous threat to Sugata, and to the reputation of his teacher's school. Indeed, the prize of the tournament is the opportunity to train Tokyo's police forces, and the social and economic capital associated with this. Against this backdrop of past enmity and present risk, we might expect Sugata and Murai to behave rudely, aggressively and callously. Yet this is not what happens. Murai treats Sugata with respect, bowing courteously, smiling when his opponent's *dogi* (道儀) rips, and asking politely: 'Shall we begin?' While the ageing and ailing Murai gives his all, his younger opponent is simply too swift, too strong, and too proficient—the older fighter is almost killed by the force of Sugata's throws. Murai tries to stand, and courageously faces his opponent again and again, but he soon admits defeat. As Murai is carried from the arena, he thanks Sugata sincerely for the match, praising the younger man's effort and ability. Clearly moved, Sanshiro says luck was with him, but Murai shakes his head, and falls into unconsciousness. Sanshiro tells him to take care, and soon visits him in his home to take dinner and tea. Their relationship after the fight is one of civility, politeness and care.

What struck me about this scene was not only the intensity of feeling, but also the depth of courtesy present in both combatants. The generous smiles, the bows, the thanks, the praise, the visits and hospitality—these are courtesies that seem foreign to the intense physical conflict between the two men, and the economic and political strife that divides their schools. What this story suggests is that courtesy is essential to the martial arts at their best, and I am inclined to agree.

Moreover, it seems I am not alone in this—in the *Hagakure*, for example, Tsunetomo Yamamoto (1979, 32–33, 37, 57, 118–121, 160) is keen to laud the virtues of etiquette and good manners, and many of the modern Japanese martial arts stress similar courtesies. Fromm and Soames (1982, 30) write: 'Without etiquette Judo would be in danger of becoming a system of thugs and would not be Judo.' For Gichin Funakoshi (1981, 101–104), courtesy is essential to *karate* (空手). He approvingly quotes the words: 'Karate begins and ends with courtesy' (Gichin Funakoshi 1981, 32). *Aikidō* (合気道) founder Morihei Ueshiba (2002, 92) speaks of courtesy cosmologically: 'When you bow deeply to the universe, it bows back.' It seems courtesy is essential to *budō* (武道), the Japanese martial ways.

In this essay, I examine the nature and value of courtesy in the Japanese martial arts. I begin with a provisional definition of courtesy (1), then introduce the notion of *budō* as a *dō*, or 'way,' with the assistance of Aristotelian notion of *ēthos* (2). I then establish the relevance of three Japanese philosophical traditions to the ways of *budō*: Shintō, Confucianism and Zen Buddhism (3). The following sections (4, 5, 6) explore the specific contributions of each tradition to courtesy in the modern Japanese *dō*. The conclusion (7) summarises the argument, and notes how the virtues of each tradition complement the other.

## 1 A definition: courtesy, politeness and *teinei*

A preliminary question: what is courtesy? While a richer account of courtesy in *budō* will have to wait, a provisional definition will help to orient us. In English, the word 'courtesy' is derived from the Old French, whence we also have 'court' and 'curtsy' (*The Oxford English Dictionary* 1979, 1094). It refers firstly to the elegance and politeness of the royal court, and secondly to all the associated qualities of respect, deference, sensitivity and tact. It is defined as both 'politeness or considerateness in intercourse with others,' (*The Oxford English Dictionary* 1979, 1094) and as 'nobleness, generosity, benevolence, goodness' (*The Oxford English Dictionary* 1979, 1094). While politeness has the connotation of a polished façade—from the Latin *politus*—courtesy implies authentic virtue. Rather than being vulgar, selfish, miserly and inconsiderate, the courteous gentleman is someone who is interested in the happiness and welfare of others. He is not necessarily ethically or politically radical, but he is certainly against anything that seems to overlook the immediate needs and wants of others. Perhaps this is why courtesy has become associated with the reactionary conservatism of the *bourgeoisie*, who accept the miseries of poverty and

exploitation as long as they are far away, or veiled in the niceties of middle-class politeness. However, if courtesy does not always include radical class, race or gender politics, it does not necessarily exclude them either. Instead, courtesy is simply a virtue associated with recognition and expression—it allows us to acknowledge others, and to show that we do so.

While it is difficult to speak of exact correspondences (Haugh 2004), the Japanese word that seems to most closely approximate this general idea of courtesy is *reigi* (礼儀). *Reigi* is best understood as ritualised courtesy and etiquette, with a particular emphasis on respect for elders, seniors and superiors, but also with a strong emphasis on civility, etiquette, generosity, and so on. Indeed, these elements are present in the encounter between Sugata and Murai—Sugata is keen to express his deference to the older man, who in turn is generous in his patience and praise. However, we might also point to *teinei* (丁寧), or 'politeness,' in their civility. While classical Japanese *bushidō* (武士道) authors stress the rituals of courtesy and deference (Shigesuke 1999, 10–11, 25–27 and *passim*; Yamamoto 1979, 22, 35, 37 and *passim*; Hojo 1982), contemporary studies point to the importance of *teinei* in modern Japanese interactions. Fukushima (2003, 27) describes *teinei* as 'communication strategies intended to maintain mutual face and to achieve smooth communication.' The strategies of *teinei* often involves the location of oneself in a group, and the differentiation of oneself from others in a particularly hierarchical social order (Haugh 2005). However, *teinei* is also associated with genuine affection, sensitivity and care, the emotions that attend to ritualised courtesy (Haugh 2004). When Yamamoto (1979, 57) stressed the importance of compassion in *bushidō*, he was making a similar point—the emotions of compassion motivate and celebrate the filial and civil virtues. And we can identify both these tendencies in the fight scene of *Sanshiro Sugata*. The men are endeavouring to maintain the dignity of the other fighter, preserving face in a public arena. But Kurosawa has also highlighted the genuine warmth and human kindness of each combatant—as if to stress that the formalities of *reigi* require the emotional commitment of *teinei*.

In this light, we might suggest that the ideal of Japanese courtesy can be understood as a unity of *reigi* and *teinei*, requiring respect, manners, discretion, modesty and reverence, but also genuine warmth and kindness. As in the English, this is clearly much richer than simple politeness, or the strategies of saving face. At its essence, it is the careful and considerate capacity to overcome self-interest and self-absorption, and the words and deeds necessary to express this.

Yet why should fighting have any relationship to courtesy? Proficiency in combat does not require courtesy, good manners, respect, or any of the moral virtues. The real question is: why does fighting in the Japanese martial arts require courtesy? To answer this question, we must grasp the basics of the Japanese martial arts tradition. When the unity of Japan was finally consolidated by Ieyasu Tokugawa in the early seventeenth century, many of the warrior arts lost their immediate practical necessity in the face of peace. In Hyams' (1982, 2) words, 'the martial arts were transformed from a practical means of combat-to-the-death to spiritual educational training.' They developed from forms of war to

forms of sophisticated aristocratic practice, and in the late Meiji period they eventually became what the Japanese call '*budō*.' Even relatively recent creations like *karate-dō*, *judō* and *aikidō* all share with the older Edo fighting arts a commitment to this *budō*, and this is indicated by the suffix '*dō*' (道). '*Dō*' is the Japanese equivalent of the Chinese 'Tao,' and it quite literally means 'way.' However, as in English, the notion of a 'way' also implies a path rather than a single destination, and an underlying principle rather than an empirical fact. It is closer to what Heidegger calls a 'woodcutter's path' (Krell 1996), which is not a preordained and predetermined journey, but a path that is created as it is walked, and through this very walking. In the contemporary Japanese martial arts (the *gendai budō*, 現代武道), *dō* is usually taken in contrast with '*jutsu*' (術), as in *aiki-jūjutsu* (合気柔術), *jūjutsu*, and so on. So what does it mean to follow a '*dō*'?

## 2 *Budō* and *ēthos*: *dō*, *jutsu* and the Greeks

Somewhat surprisingly, to clarify these Japanese ideas it is often helpful to draw on the well-articulated epistemological insights of the Greeks. While I am wary of stating with Levine (1991, 209) that 'Sino-Japanese *jutsu* corresponds exactly to Greek *technê*,' I agree with his assumption that the parallels are close enough to be instructive. For Aristotle (1995, 1140a:1–23), *technê* was a very particular kind of knowledge. It was not concerned with the necessary and eternal *a priori* truths of the cosmos, nor with the *a posteriori* contingencies and exigencies of ethics and politics. Rather, *technê* was instrumental reason, concerned with actualising the potentialities of beings that had no capacity to do so on their own, and which could be otherwise. Moreover, this was a kind of knowledge associated with people who were bound to necessity (Arendt 1971, 71, 171–178). That is, *technê* was chiefly operative in the domestic sphere, farming and slavery, and not in the free realm of the Greek *polis*. It implied neither knowledge of the 'divine' eternalities and necessities of the universe, nor the self-knowledge of those who actualise themselves through lasting words and deeds. It was simply a technical skill, a 'know-how.' While not identical, very similar things can be said for the Japanese notion of *jutsu*, particularly in the *gendai budō* of Meiji, Taishō and Shōwa Japan, but also amongst the samurai arts. Yamamoto (1979, 41), for example, stressed that samurai were not to become dilettante technicians—their way was *budō*, not this or that art. Shigesuke (1999, 6–7, 95–98) endorsed a similar distinction, urging the youth to cultivate their sensibilities before learning simple skills, and distinguishing sharply between the all-encompassing samurai attitude and its complementary arts.

In Japan a *dō*—the 'way' Yamamoto and Shigesuke spoke of—was much closer to what Aristotle would have called an *ēthos*, whence we have 'ethics.' Though the Japanese distinction was not necessarily absolute (McFarlane 1990, 404), in Greece a *technê* could be divorced from life as a whole, while an *ēthos* was this life as a whole (Aristotle 1995, 1103a:15–16). An *ēthos* could not be learned as a specialised knowledge, but instead required ongoing engagement with the

world at large, including its diverse political, economic and social dimensions (Bernstein 1986, 219). Indeed, for Aristotle (1995, 1129a:1–1130a:13), justice was the central virtue of the good man because it aimed at coherence of character: possession of all the appropriate virtues in relation to others, without contradictions of belief and value, word and deed, or will (Aristotle 1995, 1098a:18, 1129b:30–1130a:18, 1141a:31–1144b, 1151a–1152a). To develop an *ēthos* coherently required *paideia*, understood as free self-cultivation, rather than the necessary labour of the slave, or the 'moulding' associated with Plato. For Classical Greeks, this entailed *praxis* and *phronêsis*, understood respectively as free action, and the ethico-political 'know-how' required to orient this action.

We might say the same for a *dō* (Yamamoto 1979, 40–41). As *jūdōka* and British diplomat Trevor Leggett (1998, 103) puts it, a '*dō*' is 'a Way, as distinct from merely a technical skill.' As in Greece, modern *budō* emerged in opposition to necessity—the old agricultural and familial ties of Japan broke down, leading to greater personal freedom for young men, which was expressed in professional and vocational terms (Yanagida 1957, 109–110). We must be careful not to conflate the democratic *polis* with the often-authoritarian Japanese society (or its analogues in formal *budō*), but for young men of Meiji Japan, the martial arts were a way to shape themselves in exciting new ways. For example, much to his parents' horror, Funakoshi (1981, 1–7) gave up his proud samurai topknot to be a teacher, a modern *ēthos* which was intertwined with his martial arts training. These and similar developments in Japanese society required a similar commitment to something like the Greek *paideia*; to the integrated and deliberate cultivation of an *ēthos*, through committed action and ethical 'know-how,' rather than labour dictated by necessity. This, in turn, suggests a conscious attempt to cultivate a life—a whole way of living, rather than simply a passive assimilation into the needs of society. As a result, the ideal modern *budōka* is neither fragmented, contradictory or helpless, nor rigid and doctrinaire, but rather coherent, dynamic and self-possessed. He cannot be a combat specialist or a narrow pugilist, but must be as balanced, faithful, courageous and resilient in the workplace and the café as he is in combat (Leggett 1998, 109–114).

Of course, we should be wary of reifying this distinction, or projecting it anachronistically. As Friday (1997) has persuasively argued, many of the old *koryū* (古流) schools associated *jutsu* with the heightening of moral and spiritual qualities. Accordingly, Random (1987, 92) warns readers of the dangers of 'making the way of *dō* far too spiritual and [...] rejecting *bugei-jutsu* as if it were an illness.' A dehistoricised *dō/jutsu* dichotomy can easily conceal this reality, and, following Draeger and Smith (1980, 90–94), perhaps many Western martial artists have too readily accepted this distinction.

Nonetheless, samurai educators like Yamamoto (1979, 41) and Shigesuke (1999, 6–7, 95–98) did stress the unity of the samurai way, in contradistinction to piecemeal skills and complementary arts. And masters of the *gendai budō* have often drawn (knowingly or unknowingly) on a similar assumption. Obviously drawing on Kanō's legacy (Kanō 2005, 18–19, 65, 70–71, 75–77, 90–119),

Fromm and Soames (1982, 18) downplay merely technical skills, and speak of each *budōka* developing 'a deeper experience of his own life [...] a far richer existence.' Gichin Funakoshi (1981, 101) affirms precisely this point when he writes: 'Karate-do is not only the acquisition of certain defensive skills but also the mastering of the art of being a good and honest member of society.' Elsewhere, Robert W. Smith (quoted in Mason 2001, 39) speaks of Leggett as no match for the Japanese fighter Kimura, but a 'more complete *jūdō* man and scholar.' In each of these is an enunciation of the '*dō*' in *budō*. We might combine the Greek and Sino-Japanese account by saying that a *dō* is a way of life, rather than simply a way of fighting.

So, if we accept that *budō* as a modern *ēthos* is an authentic expression of Japanese culture, then any investigation of courtesy in *budō* requires that it be assessed in light of this culture. This, in turn, requires a brief investigation of the essential philosophies of Japanese civilisation, what Varley (1984, 9) calls 'the three great systems of religion and belief in premodern Japan.' We are of course speaking of Shintōism, Confucianism and Zen Buddhism, and this same triumvirate is repeated by other thinkers (Hideo 1967, 110–121; Reader et al. 1995, 42–43).[1] It is no pedantry to note that Varley speaks of 'beliefs' as well as 'religions,' because what these systems represent in Japanese culture is not simply faith contrasted with everyday Japanese life. Rather, they represent the grounding assumptions that make the Japanese who they are in everyday life. To understand the various practices of *budō* it is necessary to have some grasp of the unique Japanese philosophical and religious traditions.

## 3 Japan is not Japan: orientalism, capitalism and authenticity

Of course, we should not reify 'Japan' and 'Japaneseness' in some Orientalist farce. Clearly, Western capitalism and mechanistic materialism have had a significant influence on the Land of the Rising Sun. Allison (2002), for example, reports the increasing commodification of the intimacy once provided by family and friends in Japan, and Cameron (2000) speaks of the shallow consumption of fashion. Fujii (1999) writes of the woman of the Japanese city transformed into a commodified subject and, worse still, object. The martial arts themselves, such as sport Judo, can become narrow, glory-driven industries, antithetical to the purer conceptions of *budō* (Carr 1993). Just as contemporary Athens is not that of Pericles', modern Tokyo is no longer Musashi's Edo, or Kanō's Meiji. Moreover, it is necessary to acknowledge the diversity and complexity of the martial arts tradition itself. Edo '*bushidō*' (武士道) was certainly no homogeneous ideal (Hurst III 1990), and the modern Japanese reimagining of arts like karate has been shaped by vague historicity and various power struggles (Tan 2004). Indeed, the turn to *budō* itself can be seen as an attempt to heighten Japanese identity in the face of post-Meiji modernity; a backward glance in the midst of reform (Shun 1998; Donohue 1994, 41–43). This trend continued when Westerners took up the martial arts, with Japanese playing up 'their associations to a former golden cultural age, by evoking imageries of a 'glorious and noble' but also mystical past rooted in grand

narratives' (Tan 2004, 185). As Friday (1997, 6–9) points out, Western scholars continue to conflate the contributions of the Edo and Meiji periods, and the martial activities associated with the various Japanese classes. Clearly, we cannot treat Japanese culture generally, and modern *budō* specifically, as an unproblematic and monolithic mass.

Nonetheless, while a cynic might therefore see modern *budō* as a hollow fiction born of Western modernity and Japanese fakery, there are at least two good reasons why we should treat it as a legitimate entity. First, while Western cultural pathologies have clearly besieged Japan, the island people will encounter Western technologies and cultural principles in a Japanese way, in accordance with Japanese history (MacIntyre 1990). This is not to say that there will not be some convergence of values or behaviours, but that these cannot be understood properly unless they are placed in a Japanese context (Lebra 1976, ix–xxviii and *passim*). Second, a more enlightened approach must recognise that culture is always developing, and that the key to authenticity is not premodern stasis, but the educated and creative development of past traditions in the present (Young 2003). For example, while karate was clearly a renationalised Okinawan *Te* (手), Funakoshi (1981, 31ff.) notes how the Japanese emphasis on etiquette was already present on his island before they heightened and formalised it. More explicitly, Kodokan Judo was born out of Kanō's enlightened integration of Japanese tradition and Western science (Kanō 2005, 63–64; Arima 1908, 21ff.). It is likely that Japan's philosophical and religious traditions were similarly taken up into many of the modern *budō* arts. In Stephen Chan's (2000, 74) words, *budō* is 'still full of the courtesies and unconscious skills that Bushido was said, in the 18th century, to incorporate. [...] The martial arts are part of that culture and have played a major role...in keeping alive a widespread adherence to Zen and Shintō.' It is clear that, if the Japanese have any distinct beliefs that can be used to shed light on *budō*, they will be found within Shintō, Confucianism and Buddhism, for these have been essential to Japan's ongoing cultural development and redevelopment. In what follows, we will therefore turn to each of the three, and highlight the ways in which their essential principles are related to courtesy.

## 4 The etiquette of purity: Shintō, sincerity and courtesy

While Shintō (神道) might not be a fully autonomous, homogenous and unbroken religious or reverential tradition (Teeuwen and Scheid 2002), it does have some clearly defined characteristics. Of the three great belief systems of Japan, it is Shintō that has been labelled as the most authentically 'Japanese.' Indeed, much to the detriment of its reputation internationally, Shintō was associated with Japanese chauvinism and nationalism, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Certainly, Shintō has historically been a rallying point for ethnic Japanese against other cultures, as is evidenced by Basho's recollection of the shrine-keeper at Ise refusing him entry for looking like a Buddhist priest (Basho 1966, 54). However, there is nothing essentially

nationalistic about Shintō, at least insofar as nationalism represents a distinctly modern movement associated with capitalism, print technology and the demise of feudal economic and social formations (Anderson 1983). Rather, Shintō is considered Japanese because its premodern folk roots predate the Chinese religious and philosophical traditions of Buddhism and Confucianism, which were introduced to Japan in the sixth century. While State Shintō can legitimately be seen as an *ad hoc* outgrowth of political exigencies in late Tokugawa and Meiji Japan (Hardacre 1998), we can speak of Japanese folk shrine worship and nature reverence as 'Shintō,' from the Chinese 'Shen' and 'Tao,' meaning 'Way of the Spirits.' Of course, metaphysically, Shintō is close to primitive animism worldwide, and now shares an *ēthos* with Japanese neo-Confucianism (Hardacre 1998). Yet there is something unique about its worldview, and relation to Japanese civilisation. The essential ideas of Shintō have been, as Varley (1984, 9) puts it, 'probably the most important guide to behaviour in Japanese history.' So what are these ideas of Shintō?

Like many primitive religions, Shintō is an animism. That is, it has many divinities—millions are spoken of in the story of Amaterasu—which dwell within the natural world, rather than on high in a transcendent kingdom. Obviously, this involves none of the dualism inherent in Christianity, or in Cartesian science and philosophy. Rather, the spirits—or *kami* (神)—are beings of natural excellence, which inhabit the world, and are worthy of reverence. Indeed, this indicates another essential element of Shintō: awe and reverence. The *kami* are not gods in the Judaeo-Christian sense, but all that is resplendent in nature and man. This means that Shintō—unlike Confucianism and Buddhism—is less concerned with prescriptive ethics, and more concerned with recognising in word and deed the primordial wonder of existence itself. As Campbell (1977, 4.77) puts it, 'living Shintō is not the following of some set-down moral code, but a living in gratitude and awe amid the mystery of things.' As an animism, this 'mystery of things' is not otherworldly, but an essential ingredient in the play of everyday life.

However, while the *kami* might be immediately present in man and nature, they are not always manifest. Instead, mortals must open themselves up to the divine nature of things, and this often involved various forms of purification. For example, Shintō practitioners often hold prayers and meditation under rushing waterfalls, simultaneously cleansing themselves of taints physical and reverential, and engaging in embodied relations with the divine phenomena of nature. Indeed, the great *Gojū-Ryū* Master Gogen Yamaguchi was famed for his religious approach to *karate*, and Shintō in particular (Palabrica 1966). He often conducted meditation under waterfalls: '[d]uring his long stays in the mountains where he lived alone, he subjected himself to ascetic exercises and chastening. He worshipped the *kami* and the forces of nature' (Random 1987, 224). As indicated by Yamaguchi's example, Shintō places great emphasis on purity, and this is symbolised by the goddess Amaterasu's mirror—only a pure mirror, free from taint, is worthy of the great sun *kami*. In Smart's (1971, 255) words, '[t]he mirror reflects clearly, and so stands for honesty and sincerity.' For devotees of Shintō, the greatest virtue is this sincerity of self.

Indeed, it is this notion of sincerity that reveals the contribution of Shintō to modern Japan generally, and *budō* specifically. In the West, 'sincerity' is often an ambiguous word, chiefly because it is seen as a simple synonym of honest, committed, straightforward and unpretentious—and certainly it has these connotations. However, as *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (1979, 2830) notes, to be sincere is to be 'pure, unmixed; free from any foreign element or ingredient.' In this sense, sincerity is not simply honesty or naïveté, but rather the basic condition of being unalloyed, untainted, uncontaminated, and so on—internal and external 'purity' is the grounding metaphor underlying all these qualities (Walker 1978). For Varley (1984, 9–10), this purity is one of the hallmarks of Japanese civilisation. Moreover, it is apparently still valued in modern Japan. Having detailed the importance of sincerity, Wargo (1990, 505–506) writes of shrine Shintō that an emphasis on 'purity of heart over the specific content of action continues down to this day, even in the public arena.' Leggett (1998, 10) cites examples of modern Japanese folk who were able to recognise the sincerity of someone whose beliefs appeared ridiculous; as if sincerity could be appreciated above all else. Lebra (1976, 161–163) also stresses purity of self, and speaks of the *yakuza* (やくざ, or *gokudō*, 極道) finger-cutting ritual as a sign of extreme sincerity of repentance (Lebra 1976, 186). While he does not attribute this directly to Shintō, Ames' articulation of *bushidō* in Tokugawa and contemporary Japan reveals a similarly stringent emphasis on sincerity of intention, regardless of the purposes this intention is put to (Ames 1995). This is not to say that Shintō does not have a morality, only that at the centre of whatever morality it does have is an emphasis on freedom from pollution; on purity.

So, how does this purity manifest itself in Japanese martial arts generally, and the courtesy of *budō* more specifically? To understand this, we need to turn our attention from society and its philosophical principles to the character of experience. As all *budōka* know, the capacity to flourish in the traditional martial arts requires an incredibly intense form of focus. Known as '*kime*' (決め) in Japanese, this focus requires that all techniques are fully committed, and concentrated on their goals. Yet this is not a cognitive concentration, or a narrowness of vision. Rather, it is a lack of contradiction, of tension, of second-thoughts. All these activities are harmonious, not simply because they are physically blending one into another, but because the mental state associated with this harmony is without contradiction. As Morihei Ueshiba (2002, 78) put it, 'at the instant a warrior meets a foe, all things come into focus.' This *kime* is essentially a form of sincerity—a state of experiential purity. As Reasoner (1990) argues, this sincerity can also be found in Japanese aesthetics and ethics, where only the sincere poet can open himself up authentically to nature without contrivance, pretence or disharmony.[2] Professor Sumitomo Arima, a Japanese educationalist and one of Jigoro Kanō's high-ranking students, writes: 'Sincerity is as necessary to the human race as is oxygen to the human life; without it man can scarcely hope to live in the true sense of the word' (Arima 1908, 35). In other words, sincerity is necessary to see the world truthfully, and to do justice to what is seen in word and deed.

This is essential to understanding courtesy in *budō*. A sincere *sensei* (先生) possesses this sincerity of experience in all his actions, what *budōka* Alain Burrese (2006, 92) speaks of as a capacity to 'strip away all that's extraneous and concentrate on what's essential.' The sincere *sensei* will neither experience his students as servants, nor as fodder for a quick dollar, nor as meat for egocentric pounding. Instead, he will encounter them as fellow travellers, who need guidance in order to approach—and perhaps even to pass—him on the path of *budō*. This can be recognised in the rituals of bowing. While the bow, or *rei* (礼), is obviously an expression of politeness, it also serves to focus attention on the specific relationships of the *dōjō* (道場). When the student bows, the sincere *sensei* will return this bow. He will do so, not because of empty formality, but because he is genuinely grateful for the student's participation in his *dōjō*, and to the consequent deepening and broadening of his martial arts experience. Even if the student is a poor *budōka*, the *sensei* will bow because he wishes the student to learn what it is to be patient, understanding and careful; to be the 'bigger man.' In the same way, the teacher's decisions to pull his punches, or to follow through with his severe takedowns, will be prefaced on sincere courtesy. That is, they will be expressions of a concern for the student's martial arts education, rather than because of temper or personal gratification. This is sincerity—clarity and honesty of purpose.

Of course, this same sincerity can lead to dangerous fanaticism or viciousness. In the *Hagakure* (Yamamoto 1979, 17, 25–26, 79, 84–85, 140–141) for example, sincerity of action was essential, but a single-minded and macabre cruelty sometimes took precedence over mercy or sensitivity (Yamamoto 1979, 171). In the contemporary martial arts world, a similar narrowness can be found in some professional and amateur fighters, whose vengeful pride seems unmitigated by mercy or charity (and which is vicariously enjoyed by fans). Nonetheless, even injury can be the result of sincerity. This is not to say that injury is an end in itself, or that they should simply attempt to hurt their opponent, but rather that the consequence of *dōjō* combat with a sincere opponent will be pedagogical rather than debilitating. They will wound well because their sincerity of combat will be integrated with sincerity of purpose: excellence in *budō*. As Joe Hyams (1982, 4) puts it, the *dōjō* is 'an arena of confined conflict where we confront an opponent who is not an opponent but rather a partner in helping us to understand ourselves more fully.'

In short, Shintō's contribution to courtesy is understood as a steadfast commitment to the martial arts in word and deed, and the emotions, perceptions and thoughts that allow these arts to flourish.

## 5 Rites of authoritative conduct: Confucianism, ritual propriety and practical wisdom

However, what this examination of Shintō does not properly provide is an account of the conditions that make possible the teaching and learning prized by *budōka*. While Shintō emphasizes purity, this alone does not allow us to

grasp in detail the relations of reciprocity that make sincerity necessary, and which sincerity is required to preserve. If purity rightly affirms the sanctity of student–teacher relations, why are these student–teacher relations necessary in the first place?

To understand this, we must shed light on the social relations associated with Japanese society in general, and *budō* in particular. Lebra (1976, 1–21) speaks of Japanese society as characterised by 'social relativism,' while Odin (1996) uses the more constructive notion of the 'social self.' Like Lebra (1976, xviii), Odin situates his insights on Japanese society within the broader tradition of pragmatism, with particular emphasis on Mead. With strong affinities with the broad 'process' tradition of thinkers like Vico, Herder, Heidegger and Whitehead (Gare 1996, 310), the pragmatist approach abjures atomistic, egoistic and mechanistic accounts of human nature. Pragmatists portray human existence in terms of dynamic, distributed spatial and temporal wholes. Instead of prioritising cognition, they place human consciousness within a broader interplay between organism and environment (Dewey 1958, 13–14 and *passim*). And one of the most important kinds of interplay is social—Mead (1967, 204) writes of 'a social self [...] a self that is realized in its relationship to others,' including others in the past (Mead 1967, 256). As Odin suggests, this has strong parallels with the traditional Japanese ontology of mankind as explicated in the ethics of Watsuji (1996), with its critical approach to narrow individualistic and rationalist accounts of human nature. Watsuji speaks of the 'betweenness...of human beings' (Watsuji 1996, 157), a dialectical relationship between *I* and *Thou* that cannot be reduced to isolated subjectivities encountering discrete objects. 'A mere solitary person,' writes Watsuji, 'is an abstraction' (Watsuji 1996, 175). While Mead stresses a more Western dialectic between the social 'me' and the individual 'I,' the general portrait of selfhood is remarkably similar. As Odin (1992, 496) puts it, 'the general pattern of Japanese society that Watsuji's *ningen* theory seeks to articulate offers itself as a rich cultural paradigm illustrating the notion of a social self as set forth by Mead.'

In short, the Japanese self is essentially and explicitly 'social.' This is not to say that the Japanese do not feel immense personal responsibility—as we shall see, they do. Rather, it is to say that this responsibility is ultimately justified by social relationships rather than institutions or the idiosyncrasies of egoistic individuals. This individuality is best characterised as relational, dialectical empiricism and experience, rather than as the logically distinct selves of orthodox Enlightenment thought (Hajime 1976, 179–200; Odin 1996). To grasp this phenomenon, and its contribution to courtesy in *budō*, we must turn to the essential Sino-Japanese philosophy of the social self: Confucianism.

The social and political philosophy known as Confucianism was developed in China in the sixth and fifth centuries before the Christian era. Its main text, the *Analects*, is a collection of sayings mostly attributed to Confucius (K'ung-fu-tzu) (551–479BCE), though the original Confucian corpus is clearly the result of collaboration between Confucius and his later disciples and followers, building on previous traditions. Like the works of Plato and Aristotle over a hundred

years later, the *Analects* depicts scholarly gentlemen trying to understand and reinvigorate an older tradition crumbling in the face of social change and unrest. As Ni (2002, 4) puts it, 'the Zhou ritual system was undergoing disintegration, and the society was witnessing deep moral decline, social chaos, and general destruction. It was upon such a social background that China has its most glorious period of philosophy.' Whereas Epicurus, like Hobbes and Locke, would later respond to social upheaval with atomistic individualism, Confucius presaged Plato and Aristotle by stressing the fundamental unity of society, and the importance of socially-oriented individuals. Confucianism made its way into Japan almost a thousand years later, but its influence was keenly felt. Moreover, the Neo-Confucianism of Chinese scholars like Hsi Chu and Wang Yang-Ming guided much of the social and political philosophy of Edo Japan. In order to grasp the essentials of Japan, we must therefore explore the fundamental tenets of Confucianism.

The most obvious trait of Confucianism is its deep sense of personal and communal responsibility. For Confucians, society cannot be secured by divine decree, any more than men can be born ethically responsible. Rather, society and its members must be created and recreated lest they fall into oblivion. As Ni (2002, 14) writes, 'the realization that human conduct can affect the will of Heaven logically leads to the sense of being responsible for one's own destiny.' What therefore differentiates Confucianism from Christianity and the other Abrahamic religions is that it neither defers to the commandments of god, saints or prophets, nor does it place the source of human morality in a transcendent realm. Instead, it admits that ethical life and the health of the community are burdens to be borne by mortals, who must work throughout their lives to maintain goodness, just as they maintain health. While Confucians speak of a 'Way,' the Master is quick to qualify this: 'It is the person who is able to broaden the way (*dao* 道), not the way that broadens the person' (Confucius 1998, XV.29). In short, Confucianism is a philosophy of human responsibility, rather than faith or blind obedience to divine or cosmic will.

From this responsibility comes Confucianism's basic concern for healthy human relations. Rather than treating society as a secondary aggregate of primary individuals, Confucianism treats society as the primary ethical and political reality. This is not to say that it omits recognition of individuality, but simply that it does not accord it the same metaphysical priority as do thinkers like Hobbes and Locke, or the Christian theologians of the eternal soul. As Confucius (1998, XVII.2) put it, 'human beings are similar in their natural tendencies [...] but vary greatly by virtue of their habits.' Similar statements stressing a shared though diverse community recur throughout the *Analects* (IV.25, XII.7, XII.24, XIV.24). In short, we are naturally social—we might even say 'political' with Aristotle—and atomistic individualism is against this nature. If we are to follow nature, we must therefore address ourselves to the needs of our fellow men. Of course, we should care for family and ancestors before distant strangers and their dead kin—Confucius is no Christian universalist (Confucius 1998, II.4). This filial piety is at the heart of social concern, 'the root

of authoritative conduct' (Confucius 1998, I.2). Yet this genocentrism does not exclude consideration of the great multitude who are not our blood relations. Rather, filial piety is the grounding predisposition of the gentleman, upon which is built concern for others. Indeed, for Confucians we need these others to become good ourselves—they are the context for our ethical and political care (Confucius 1998, IV.25), particularly when they are our superiors (Confucius 1998, IV.10). In short, Confucianism is a philosophy of broad consanguinity. As such, its orienting metaphor is the family, which is used to contextualise and motivate a more general concern for harmonious social relations.

The word Confucians give to this concern is *ren* (仁), which is variously translated as humaneness, benevolence, impartial benevolence, human-heartedness, altruism, goodness and humanity. 'Humaneness' is a compelling version,[3] though Rosemont and Ames' 'authoritative conduct' emphasizes the essential normative character more clearly. What, then, is authoritative conduct for Confucius? As Confucianism is not a systematic philosophy, it is not so easy to give a straightforward theoretical account. As the Greek 'analects' suggests, the founding document of Confucianism is a collection of sayings and conversations, and not a tome of rigorous post-Aristotelian philosophy. Nonetheless, it is possible to gain a rich sense of Confucian thought from these, just as it is possible to grasp the character and knowledge of Socrates from the Platonic dialogues. Indeed, the *Analects* give a particularly illuminating account of *ren*. Early on, Confucius speaks of the man of *ren* as a kind of moral collaborator, helping his fellow men along the path of righteousness.[4] He is not a saint, but a gentleman, helping to cultivate others as he cultivates himself. As Confucius (1998, VI.30) puts it, 'authoritative persons establish others in seeking to establish themselves and promote others in seeking to get there themselves.' In short, *ren* entails concern for the goodness of others, and the identification of their interests with our own. Yet this does not mean that the Confucian gentleman is officious, overbearing, patronising or tyrannical (Confucius 1998, XIII.6, 13, 26). Rather, as one who has cultivated himself to appreciate the subtleties of right and wrong in varying contexts (Confucius 1998, XII.1–3, XV.37), his task is to reflect on his own words and deeds while simultaneously bringing out the best in others (Confucius 1998, XII.16, XIV.30, XV.19). He is generous and tolerant with lesser everyman (Confucius 1998, XIX.3). In this way, Confucianism does not ignore selfhood, but instead reveals how the quality of this self is bound up in its orientation toward other selves. Complementing this, Confucius maintains that the gentleman should focus on his own qualities, and not on others' appreciation of these qualities (Confucius 1998, XIV.30, XV.19). In short, the good man is rightly concerned with his own character, but this character is improved by trying to help others, instead of placating them. This help is not paternalistic, coercive or patronising, but rather supportive and exemplary. Such is the way of *ren*.

For Confucians, *ren* is given life by *li* (禮), *yi* (義) and *shu* (恕). *Li* is best translated as 'ritual propriety,' though it is also a 'path' or 'pattern.' As the manifest expression of Confucian righteousness, *li* covers the multitude of behaviour from

the most obvious points of politeness to the finer nuances of aristocratic courtliness. *Yi* is what is expressed in these behaviours, and it is characterised as the right words and deeds at the right time and place; it is righteousness itself, what Ames and Rosemont translate as 'appropriate.' Put simply, *yi* is to *li* what matter is to form. For example, if we are mourning in the West, our black clothes, tears, and quiet words all 'fit' with *yi*; they are the right rituals at the right time and place. Yet this 'fit' can never be universal or eternal—it is not a Kantian categorical imperative. Rather, *yi* and *li* are always associated with a given background, so that different people in different circumstances have different obligations and privileges (Confucius 1998, IV.10, XV.37). As Confucius put it (Confucius 1998, IV.10), 'exemplary persons [...] are neither bent on nor against anything; rather, they go with what is appropriate (*yi* 義).' As Odin (1996, 274) has suggested, drawing on Mead, the relationship between *li* and *yi* mirrors that between the social 'me' and the individual 'I'—rather than a universal logic, it is an ongoing tension between complementary principles. In order to achieve *ren* through the dialectic reconciliation of *yi* and *li*, the Confucian gentleman requires *shu*: 'putting oneself in the other's place' (Confucius 1998, IV.15). *Shu* is the capacity to reflect on our own emotions, thoughts and perceptions, and use these to develop empathy for others. This is expressed in what is erroneously called the 'Golden Rule': 'Do not impose on others what you yourself do not want' (Confucius 1998, XV.24). Rather than being a universal law—which would lead to a host of absurdities—it is an exhortation to treat others as actual selves, worthy of the same consideration we ourselves so desire. With none of the epistemological anxiety which characterises the post-Cartesian West, *shu* allows us to afford others the same humanity we have. This does not lead to easy answers, but it is clearly the first step toward the full expression of *ren*. It allows traditions to provide the common stock of ideas, phrases and practices, but does not necessarily shackle gentlemen to the empty repetition of these. It sees each individual as capable of judiciously developing good habits in morality and etiquette, without assuming that these individuals can provide the context and conditions for these habits on their own. As with *phronêsis* in Aristotle (1995, 1151a–1152a, 1141a:31–1144b), this is an *ēthos* of 'practical wisdom,' which sees individuals working together to develop good habits for a good society, without reducing these habits to arbitrary whims or empty universal formulae. While clearly conservative, in this way Confucianism provides a wise philosophy of everyday ethical life, and the means to develop this life.

In short, the Confucian ideal is one of education. In order to keep wisdom alive, men must be educated, and educate others in turn. For Chinese gentlemen, *ren* required a worldly grasp of *li*, *yi* and *shu*, as well as a grasp of literature, fashion and art. *Xiao* (孝), or filial piety, was also important: recognising one's elders, masters and mentors, and their pedagogical labours. By taking responsibility for oneself, the pious man was able to exemplify the best in one's family, including ancestors.

In Edo Japan, this Confucian educationalism led to the idealised practical ethicist: the samurai. Of course, the shogunate and its samurai supporters

drew on the more conservative elements of Confucianism to justify and maintain its rule. In particular, the theories of the Chinese neo-Confucian Xi Zhu (1130–1200) influenced Japanese thinkers like Seika Fujiwara (1561–1619) and his student Rayan Hayashi (1583–1657), who focused more on the binding qualities of *li* than on *ren* and *shu*. Zhu's writings had a more metaphysical tone than those of Confucius, transforming *li* into a cosmological principle that the masses could be turned toward. Perhaps retaining a typically Japanese distaste for philosophical abstraction (Hajime 1976), his Japanese interpreters like Hayashi retained this emphasis on manipulation or guidance, without seriously taking up the metaphysics. Befitting the shogun's absolute rule over a once-divided country, Zhu's affirmation of Confucian *xiao* was used as the central metaphor for the State, with consanguineal hierarchy analogous to the Japanese 'family' under the shogun. WG Beasley (1999, 173) writes: 'Humanity, righteousness and decorum all had a place in the virtues [neo-Confucianism] identified. To Xi Zhu, however, loyalty and filial piety were the primary ones, defining the duties of low to high. To the feudal leaders of Japan [...] this gave the doctrine more appeal than the [...] ideas of Buddhism.' While warriors before the Edo period also endorsed practices like filial piety,[5] with Tokugawa's reign it became institutionalised. In other words, what was once the practical ethics of a Chinese meritocratic bureaucracy became the legitimising philosophy of Japan's hierarchicalised and hereditary ruling classes.

Nonetheless, there were heterodox schools whose writings gave alternatives to orthodox Edo thought. Tōju Nakae (1608–1648) and Banzan Kumasawa (1619–1691), for example, were influenced by the ideas of Chinese neo-Confucianist Wang Yang-Ming (1472–1529), who took issue with Xi Zhu's more conservative interpretation. While Zhu stressed *li*, Yang-Ming maintained the virtues of *xin*, or 'mind.' Perhaps more true to the ancient Confucian stress on practical wisdom and contextual morality, Yang-Ming's approach was particularly attuned to the pragmatic and strong-willed samurai class (Varley 1984, 182). While we must be careful not to idealise the samurai, we can nonetheless recognise that the best of Tokugawa Japan maintained an excellent Confucian education, balanced between literary and artistic pursuits, and those of the sword and abacus. Often bureaucrats and poets as well as soldiers, the finest samurai were the embodiment of the Confucian emphasis on responsibility, collaboration and education. While other samurai also endorsed clear Confucian principles (Wilson 1982, 71), this was best characterised in the *Bushidō Shoshinshu* of Taira Shigesuke (1639–1730), a Confucian scholar and strategist of the Edo age. Steeped in Confucian virtues (Shigesuke 1999, 7–10, 25–27, 72–73), Shigesuke's work recommends that samurai be well-read in the classics before they learn *jutsu* (Shigesuke 1999, 6–7), spending their free time practicing calligraphy, and reading ancient stories and military texts (Shigesuke 1999, 10–12). For Shigesuke, the greatest warriors were not narrow specialists or hardened thugs, but well-rounded, cultivated gentlemen-soldiers (Shigesuke 1999, 95–98). They faced death each day, not out of macabre obsession or grim Stoicism, but out of the sober realisation that mortal finitude requires

us to make the most of the time we have, rather than wasting it with degeneracy, or throwing it away with foolhardiness (Shigesuke 1999, 3–5, 60–62). In view of this samurai ideal, we might characterise the essential Confucian legacy in this way: mortal life is our own responsibility, and we must carefully work together to cultivate ourselves and one another.

This samurai legacy can be found in *budō* courtesy. While combat can always be necessitated by self-interest and indifference, *budō* as an education requires Confucian *ren*. With the authoritative conduct of superiors, we learn without undue fear in an atmosphere of patience and consideration. With the authoritative conduct of inferiors, we are allowed to teach; to transform our embodied knowledge into fresh insights. With the authoritative conduct of our peers, we test our skills. Yet all this would not occur, were it not for *li*, *yi* and *shu*. It is *li* that expresses all this; it is each bow, each expression of welcome, and each firmly delivered command. While *li* might change its expression in ritual, *yi* will always be retained: righteousness, understood as appropriateness of words and deeds. In other words, Confucian courtesy in the dojo is how we let our fellow *budōka* think, feel and perceive our authoritative conduct toward them. For example, when we injure an opponent severely during *kumite* it is often appropriate to sit to the side in *seiza* (正座), facing away from the mats. As an expression of regret and remorse, it is the right thought, feeling and deed at the right time. Were we to begin crying, or to glorify our violence with shouts of triumph, we would not be gentlemen. In other words, we would not have *yi*. Yet if our opponent were wounded less severely, we might not feel that regret and remorse were appropriate. Our *shu* would remind us that too much expression of regret and remorse is patronising and shameful, just as too little is arrogant and shameless. By sitting out in the right time and place, we demonstrate our commitment to the well-being of our fellow *budōka*, and continue to maintain virtuous habits of sensitivity, empathy and discipline. In this environment, our opponent knows he can train hard and strong in an environment of safety, and we assume the same for ourselves; we might bruise, strain or bleed, but we can face these things with courage because we know they are in our best interest. In this way, the dojo is a place where mortals create and recreate themselves, and help one another do the same. This creation is not lawmaking or whimsy, but education, understood as the cultivation of habits which lead to the right words and deeds at the right time and place.

In this Confucian world, courtesy is neither a divine commandment nor a hollow shibboleth, but a path to *ren*. And being able to exemplify these virtues in oneself, and cultivate them in others, is what makes the teacher worthy of filial piety.

## 6 The etiquette of nothingness: Zen, *mushin* and courtesy

Yet even with its practical philosophy of character and virtue, Confucianism as a doctrine fails to shed light on one of the most characteristic aspects of *budō*:

no-mindedness, or *mushin* (無心). Indeed, both Confucianism and Shintō share a commitment to the specific content of subjective experience, and the individual and social benefits this content affords. By contrast, modern *gendai budō* is sometimes characterised by the conspicuous absence of anything resembling personal experience; a state in which the self in general, and the mind in particular, are apparently nullified. For example, Master Egami, Funakoshi's successor at the *Shōtō-kai*, is quoted as saying: 'The only secret is to practice seriously with perseverance, in order to attain the state of [...] non-ego' (Random 1987, 227). Elsewhere, Funakoshi (1981, 35) himself speaks of the '*kara*' (空) in *karate* as the 'emptiness, the void, that lies at the heart of all creation,' an emptiness we ourselves must be. While explicitly affirming modern principles of philosophy and science, *jūdōka* Sumitomo Arima (1908, 33–34) writes of very similar things. This commitment to no-mind, egolessness, or abandonment of self cannot be accommodated within explanations of Shintō and Confucianism. To account for this phenomenon, and to reveal its relationship to courtesy, we must turn to the philosophical tradition most associated with contemporary Japan: Zen Buddhism.

Buddhism began neither in China, nor in Japan. Rather, its place of birth was in what is now India, also the origin of Hinduism, Sikhism and Jainism. The most well-known historical Buddha, Gautama, was born into an aristocratic family in the sixth or fifth century before Christ. Like many ascetics, he chose to leave behind his family and fortune for a life of spiritual purity. Sitting in meditation beneath the *Bodhi* tree, Gautama had a stunning epiphany: if, as Vedic philosophy taught, all things were no-thing, then so too was *Brahman*, the great One. If grasping at illusions causes our ills, then the quest for spiritual unification with *Brahman* is itself a source of ills. As Watts (1958, 57) puts it, 'apparently the Buddha felt that the doctrine of the *atman* in the *Upanishads* lent itself too easily to a fatal misinterpretation. It became an object of belief [...] something to which the mind could cling.' The task of someone seeking enlightenment is therefore not to find joy in a pure place beyond the pains of suffering, but to recognise that all grasping leads to suffering. It is not to make distinctions between illusion and *Brahman*, but to recognise that all such distinctions are illusions.

While this sounds quite mundane and banal as an abstract idea, it hides a stinging paradox. Indeed, this paradox is central to Buddhism, with its many riddles, puzzles and absurdities. As Deguchi, Garfield and Priest (2005) have pointed out, while many of these are metaphorical, pedagogical, contingent or *reductio* arguments, Buddha's essential paradox is ontological. If everyday life with its distinctions is illusory, then it would be foolish to distinguish between this and the being of *nirvāṇa*—this would be yet another illusion. The only truth is that which is neither true, nor not-true, and yet both: the void. Better still, it has nothing to do with truth or non-truth, but it is simply suchness.

How do Buddhists respond to this baffling realisation? There are two relevant stories of what happened to Gautama after his epiphany, both of which have very little historical value, but a great deal of philosophical value.

The first version holds that the Buddha soon preached the Four Noble Truths to his disciples. However, the second version holds that Buddha did not preach a sermon. Instead, he simply held up a flower. If all suffering is caused by grasping, then words too are a cause of suffering; they trap us within illusions, and seduce us into grasping. Therefore the doctrine to be preached is not of words—indeed, there can be no doctrine (Enji 1989). Bodhidharma, the twenty-eighth patriarch who introduced Buddhism to China, is quoted as saying:

> A special transmission outside the teachings,
> Not depending on the human word,
> Directly pointing to the human heart,
> Seeing into its heart, and becoming Buddha.
>
> *Enji 1989, 14*

This tradition of thought represents the essential orientation of Zen Buddhism, which grew under the influence of Chinese Taoism and Confucianism in sixth-century China, in opposition to Buddhist scholasticism (Myokyo-ni 1987, 28; Watts 1958, 81–89; Sansom 1976, 340). Grounded in this non-analytical and practical milieu, Zen monks do not shy away from manual labour or physical activity, as their Indian kin once did. If the world of illusion is in fact *nirvāṇa*, then grasping at *nirvāṇa* in scholastic otherworldliness is itself linked to suffering. It is better to simply be and do, quite naturally, in the everyday.

In the Mahāyāna tradition, of which Zen is one school, it is in this everyday that the *Bodhisattva* works to help all life attain buddhahood (Humphreys 1984, 338–341). In this tradition, we are all Buddha already—the compassionate *Bodhisattva* simply helps us to realise this in word and deed. This, in turn, requires neither more effort, nor less effort, but a kind of effortless effort, which gains something without grasping at it. Rinzai Buddhist nun Myokyo-ni (1987, 79) describes this as a 'razor-sharp path' between effort and 'letting go.' In Taoism, this middle way is known as *wuwei*, which translates as 'non-interference.' It is a description of the Tao, and of *Brahman* in Hinduism: an effortless growth, wherein all things rise and fall, are born and die, without thought (Watts 1958, 16–17). In Taoism and other Sino-Japanese philosophies, this *wuwei* is also a way of experiencing the world, referred to by the Japanese as *mushin*. As in Shintō, the experience of *mushin* is compared to a mirror (Myokyo-ni 1958, 62–63). However, the mirror-like purity of Zen is one of absolute emptiness: 'In itself, the mirror has no colour, and so it can reflect all colours' (Myokyo-ni 1958, 63). Clearly, there are strong similarities between Shintō and Zen purity, but in Zen there is no *kami*, no divinity, and no sincerity of self. Instead, in Zen there is no self, and to be and do in *mushin* is not for the gods, or for the good of self—it is simply to be and do, as if for nothing at all. Like *wuwei*, this is an 'effortless effort,' where our words and deeds are neither contrived nor lazy, without need for intellectual analysis or deliberate striving. As Watts (1958, 21) puts it, 'the idea is not to reduce the human mind to a

moronic vacuity, but to bring into play its innate and spontaneous intelligence by using it without forcing it.' In short, Zen leads to an expert's wisdom with a beginner's *naïveté*, which neither brutally grasps nor senselessly lets-go.

When the warrior classes of Japan gained power in the Kamakura era, this school of thought was taken up by the State. Not surprisingly, the experience of *mushin* was particularly attractive to the military aristocracy, whose mental state in combat required trained spontaneity to be effective. It stressed self-discipline and introspection (Sansom 1976, 341), and in its embrace of the void it allowed the *samurai* (侍) to face the nothingness of death. To live and die as samurai, the warriors of the Kamakura era took from Zen the mindless acuity of *mushin*, and the calmness in battle that comes from an acceptance of the nothingness beneath all worldly illusions. Sōhō Takuan's *The Unfettered Mind* (Takuan 1986, 31–32) is the perfect example of this philosophy in action—we put our mind nowhere so that it will be everywhere. Takuan speaks of *fudōshin* (不動心), which William Scott Wilson translates as 'immovable wisdom.' This gives the impression of rigidity and weight—like a mountain—but Takuan stresses the lightness, elegance and swiftness of *fudōshin*. It is a state characterised by the lack of narrow cognition and coordination, and unselfconscious, embodied action—'the mind that stretches throughout the entire body and self,' writes Takuan (1986, 32). This is *mushin* incorporated into the framework of martial competency.

While we must be careful not to frame the samurai entirely within the ambit of Zen philosophy (Friday 2005), or attribute to these warriors unattainable ideals (Sansom 1976, 499), it is clear that the Zen experience of *mushin* was essential to the identity of the Japanese warrior class. As Suzuki (1967, 104) puts it, 'it requires training to hear a voice in silence, to find action in inaction, motion in immotion, or to have preparedness in peace and fearlessness in death. Such a tendency must have appealed to the warrior class.' While warning that the way of Buddha was not that of the samurai, Yamamoto (1979, 95, 167ff.) stressed the importance of unthinking decisiveness, devoid of loquaciousness and calculation (Yamamoto 1979, 37, 44, 60–61, 68, 78, 146), and non-attachment to life and death alike (Yamamoto 1979, 158). This was the military equivalent of Buddha holding up a flower: a silent expression of suchness amidst a world of verbose illusion.

While it would be problematic to see modern *budō* as a direct outgrowth of the samurai *ēthos*, or to forget the role of Confucianism in both (Friday 1997, 104–108), it is clear that Zen is essential to modern Japanese martial arts. *Mushin*, in particular, is referred to by many modern *budō* masters: it is the 'emptiness' of Funakoshi, the 'non-ego' of his successor Egami, and the 'absence and presence of mind' of Arima. The late Gogen Yamaguchi speaks of '*muga*' (無我): 'a state of nothingness [...] freed to act without interruption and thought' (Will 2006, 58). Similarly, *aikidō* founder Ueshiba (2002, 87) writes: 'return to true emptiness. Stand in the midst of the great void.'[6] Even the seemingly thuggish Mas Oyama (1967, 8) stresses that the 'man who wants to walk the way of karate cannot afford to neglect Zen and spiritual training.'

Accordingly, training in *budō* involves means and ends akin to those of Zen. Just as Zen priests seek the novice's *naïveté*, the goal of *budō* masters is '*sho-shin*' (初心), or 'beginner's mind' (Clarke 2006, 70; Fromm and Soames 1982, 61–63). Just as Zen monasteries inflict psychological and physical pains on novices to 'kill their ego' (Myokyo-ni 1987, 35–36), so too do *budō sensei*. In *kyudō* (弓道), for example, the techniques of the bow and arrow are painfully repeated over and over again, with little reward or personal gratification (Herrigel 1983). On this, Master Shibata says: '[M]y heart is the target. Ego gets cut out...cut, cut, cut' (Klens-Bigman 2001, 79). The celebrated Master Awa speaks similarly (Herrigel 1983, 85–86). Bruises and cuts from fists and feet, strained muscles, bursting lungs, burning arms—these are all ways of seeking no-mind through suffering. As the self forgets itself in the face of physical and psychological pain, *mushin* can blossom.

However, in light of this austere path to Zen enlightenment, it is difficult to see how a Buddhist *budō* could necessarily lead to courtesy. Moreover, this is not a peripheral side-effect, but a central consequence: if all is illusion, the various conventions of care and sincerity are also illusion. Indeed, this is why Zen Buddhism is seen as a kind of 'pressure valve' for the moral orthodoxy of Confucianism and the Tokugawa shogunate (Watts 1958, 142–143). In the face of Confucian righteousness and propriety, Zen is mocking laughter or profound silence, shrugging off or smashing the taken-for-granted in moral life (Watts 1958, 147–148). Instead of being hospitable, polite, patient and calm, Zen masters can seem cruel, rude, bad-tempered and violent. Yet this is not the whole story at all. Certainly, Zen does contain within it biting brutality and wit, but the task of the *Bodhisattva* and monk alike is nonetheless one of compassion. Alongside the supreme wisdom of *Maha-Prajna*, Christmas Humphreys (1984, 39) speaks of '*Maha-Karuna*, supreme compassion for all living things.' Instead of simply seeing Void, the compassionate *Bodhisattva* also sees the wondrous suchness of things; the Buddhahood veiled by *maya*. While the wisdom that knows Void might seem otherworldly, compassion leads back to the well-being of all things in their everyday diversity.

In *budō*, this *Bodhisattva*-mind is empty of vanity and pride, and equally devoid of anger, hate and lust. The Zen *sensei* blessed with *Bodhisattva*-mind will therefore not be compromised by the usual vices that corrupt the arrogant, the lazy, the vicious and the cruel. Instead, they will treat the pettiness and fear of everyday mortality with the same laughter, silence and mockery we see in the old Zen tales. In this light, their courtesies will not necessarily be those of hospitality, goodwill and magnanimity—they will not overcome egocentrism and express their recognition of others simply through being friendly, welcoming or charming. Instead, they will shrug off pain and blood, and smile at sweat and straining muscles. They will use the many tricks of the 'Great Vehicle' of Mahāyāna to lead their students and himself to *mushin*. For example, Suzuki tells the story of a swordsmaster who had his student cooking, cleaning and washing for years. When the student was preoccupied with some mundane task or another, the master stole up behind him and thumped him with a stick. Over the years,

the student slowly learned to sense the attack. One day, the student decided to attack the teacher while the latter was cooking, and the master calmly blocked his attack with a frying pan. The student suddenly grasped what he had learned, and understood the kindness of his master (Suzuki 1959, 13–15).

In short, this is brutality as courtesy, mockery as courtesy; the expression of a deeper love for all things, rather than simply the polish of politeness. This unyielding, unforgiving love is Zen's contribution to courtesy in *budō*.

## 7 Conclusion

Courtesy is neither essential to the martial arts in general, nor to being Japanese in particular. However, it is essential to the Japanese martial arts because *budō* is supposed to express the finest ideas of Japanese civilisation. These ideas are neither homogeneous, nor unalloyed by the forces of contemporary Western capitalism. In many ways, *budō* is a traditional product of a very modern Japan, and the various contradictions associated with this have been exacerbated and often obscured as the martial arts have been taken up in the West. Nonetheless, the Japanese martial arts represent the creative preservation and development of the three great Japanese philosophical traditions. Consequently, it is in light of these traditions that we must understand courtesy in *budō*. Courtesy is the purity of Shintō, the wise propriety of Confucianism, and the mischievous, brutal but kind no-mindedness of Zen. This leads respectively to the removal of what is physically and ethically compromising, the forging of fruitful educational bonds, and the free and spontaneous activity necessary to take these up in the dojo and in everyday life.

Of course, all *budōka* lean toward one tradition more than another. Funakoshi was influenced quite strongly by Confucianism, Yamaguchi turned to Shintō, and both took up insights from Zen. Master Egami seemed more compelled by Buddhism than anything else. Kanō's writings are clearly marked by the sober secularism of Confucianism, with occasional themes from Zen. Similar differences can be seen in classical authors like Takuan and Shigesuke. Nonetheless, in the words and deeds of each master there is Shintō purity, Confucian propriety and Zen selflessness.

Moreover, the vices and virtues of these three traditions complement one another. As with the interplay of *yi* and *li*, I and Me, this involves a series of mutualistic oppositions. If Shintō emphasizes purity and the rejection of all that is extraneous, this can also lead to narrowness and obsessive attention to what is familiar or commonplace. These pitfalls are overcome by the practical wisdom associated with Confucianism, and the Zen Buddhist antipathy toward reification. These allow greater flexibility, and the capacity to see through idols. The selflessness of Zen Buddhism can be rewarding, but it can also lead to cruelty, vulgarity and thoughtlessness. These can be avoided through attention to the ethical propriety of Confucianism, and the Shintō stress on sanctification. They lead to mindfulness of what others are expecting of us, and a greater capacity for reverence. Confucianism allows for civility and education, but it

can also be conservative and repressive. It is in light of these that the irreverence of Zen Buddhism, and Shintō's emphasis on the richness of personal experience, are particularly liberating. They allow *budōka* the freedom to transcend stifling expectations, and deference to the whims of the crowd. This, in turn, facilitates the brutal courtesies so characteristic of *budō*. As a result of the unification of these traditions in thought and practice, *budōka* are given the chance to freely develop their *ēthos*; to follow the path of *dō*.

No doubt there are many ways to develop the virtues associated with courtesy in the Japanese martial arts. Moreover, we must not assume that Japan has a monopoly on such things. All authentic traditions have their own virtues, and ideas of what virtue is (MacIntyre 1984). We see courtesy in all times and places, often wedded to aristocratic nobility and its martial accomplishments. Nonetheless, in *budō* we see a unique combination of gentility and brutality, civility and indifference, rich personal experience and selfless mindlessness. This combination is what exhorts us to treat others with courtesy as they bloody our noses or break our bones. As in *Sanshiro Sugata*, we must learn to bow to our enemies.[7]

## Notes

1 A colleague has noted that other kinds of Buddhism, such as Pure Land, are more popular in Japan. I grant this. The point of Varley, Hiedo and Reader and others is that Zen is a more *distinctive* Japanese tradition, particularly in the martial arts.

2 While Reasoner notes that this union between artistic character and artistic value is problematic for Western thinkers like Monroe Beardsley, the seminal work of aestheticians like Collingwood (1958, 280–285) and Dewey (1958, 52–54 and *passim*)—the latter influential on Beardsley—makes it clear that a certain sincerity of consciousness is necessary to transform experience into art.

3 As *ren* is homophonous with the Chinese character for 'man,' 'humaneness' suggests the ethical and anthropocentric nuances of the word. Of course, we should be careful to distinguish 'humaneness' from 'humanism' and 'humanitarian,' which relate more directly to modern China, and a variety of internal and external influences. On this, see Lee (1995). Without importing too much that is foreign to *ren*, humaneness is a helpful translation of *ren*, as various other scholars have implicitly affirmed. The other popular translations all capture the various aspects of *ren*, but authoritative conduct seems to encompass all these meanings, albeit with some sacrifice of specificity. For some uses of 'humaneness' as *ren*, see: Lee (1995), Yao (2001), Ackerley (2005), Tao and Brennan (2003) and van Norden (2002).

4 I'm using masculine pronouns in keeping with the Confucian writings, but there is no reason why 'she' and 'her' are not equally appropriate.

5 See, for example, the opinions of Shigetoki Hojo, Yoshimasa Shiba, Sadaya Imagawa and Nobushige Takeda (Wilson 1982, 38–39, 49, 60, 102).

6 Ueshiba was not strictly a follower of Zen—his book abounds with religious and mystical pronouncements that seem closer to Western New Age movements than to traditional Japanese philosophy. Nonetheless, it is clear that, in his commitment to No-Mind and the void, Ueshiba was continuing the Zen tradition of Japanese *budō*.

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